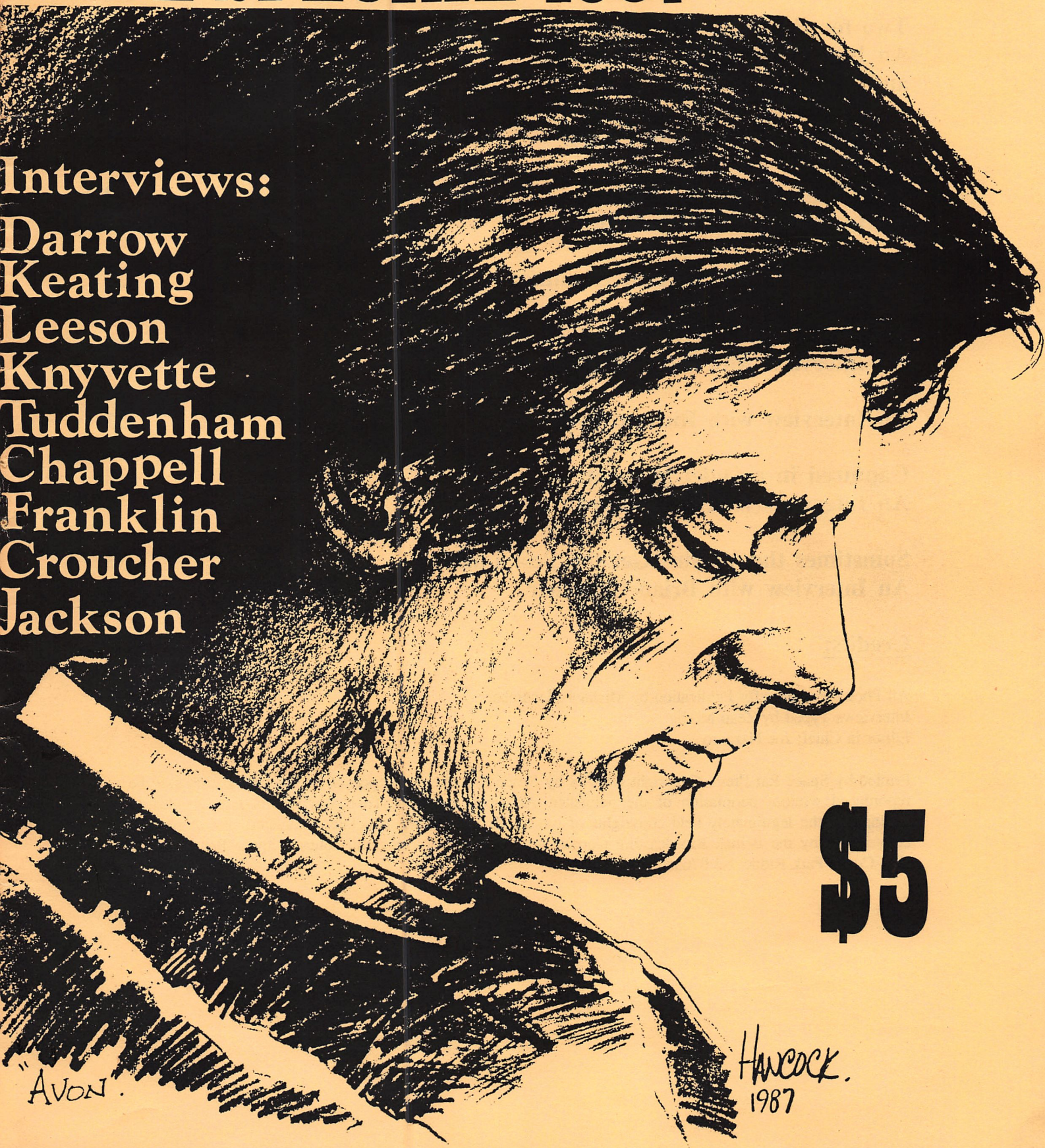


THE FREEDOM CITY FALL SPECIAL 1987

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Interviews:

Darrow
Keating
Leeson
Knyvette
Tuddenham
Chappell
Franklin
Croucher
Jackson



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NEWS FROM FREEDOM CITY

Welcome to the 1987 *Freedom City Gazette* Fall Special, a project which started out as a somewhat small project, but wound up growing into the monster you're holding now. As I look at the massive pile of typewritten pages on my desk, I am reminded of the small snowball that was rolled down the hill, which, by the time that it reached bottom, had attained gargantuan proportions. Had I known the Fall Special would turn into such a large snowball, I might have thought twice about doing it!

We started thinking about this project shortly after the second issue of *The Freedom City Gazette*, our Paul Darrow special. Although there was a lot of ground I wanted to cover in upcoming issues, many readers were already clamoring for another interview with Darrow, as well as Michael Keating, who we interviewed in our first issue. The answer: a special issue of sorts, which would feature new interviews with Michael and Paul, plus a few new ones thrown in for good measure. I decided to include part of a John Leeson interview which I thought our readers would enjoy. John had guested in two episodes of *Blake's 7*, so our starting number was three.

Fast forward to August: I make it to Scorpio V, and we added a few more names to our list: Peter Tuddenham, Jan Chappell, and Sally Knyvette (the latter two were interviewed in what was a bit of a three ring circus with over a dozen other people present, but you takes 'em as you gets 'em.) The number of interviews swelled to six.

Fast forward to September: During my trip to England, I have the opportunity to speak to several *Blake's 7* people, including many who I was meeting for the first time. Although I now had plenty of material for upcoming issues, I decided to add a few more interviews to the Fall Special. I threw in a conversation with Richard Franklin (who had a brief but memorable scene in *Aftermath*), plus an interview with Brian Croucher, the second actor to take on the role of Travis. At the last minute, we made an eleventh hour change and included David Jackson's first American interview, and with that, our number (gulp!) stood at eight. With the exception of Gareth Thomas (who is interviewed in the fourth issue of the *Gazette*), we have assembled the entire original cast of B7 between these pages, and we think it's one hell of a package for five bucks. We hope you'll agree. Anyway, sit back and enjoy our Fall Special. As I write this introduction, winter is only two weeks away, but it seems rather appropriate for a project that snowballed so much over the last four months.

Regards,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joe'.

Joe Nazzaro

Introduction: A Few Words About the Cast **by Joe Nazzaro**

Before we begin our first interview, I'd like to share a few comments regarding the people you're going to read about.

John Leeson (*Interviewed at the Creation Thanksgiving Con, New York- 11/29/86*) seems quiet and soft-spoken, but beneath that "harmless" facade lurks a mischievous imp, trying to get out. An interview with John is funnier to listen to than to read; he has a natural sense of comic timing and delivery, and, playing back the tape of our conversation, I found myself laughing all over again. The bulk of the interview, detailing John's work in **Doctor Who** as well as his early acting career, will be printed in an upcoming issue of *A Mouth on Legs*, the newsletter of the **Jersey Jagaro**. Send us a SASE if you'd like more info.

Paul Darrow (*Creation Starlog Festival, New York- 5/9/87*) gave me my first **Blake's 7** interview, back when *The Freedom City Gazette* was just a glimmer in my eye. Aside from Terry Nation, Paul has always been one of the staunchest supporters of the series, and I'm certain that his numerous convention appearances in America are one of the reasons the show has been so popular over here.

When I was over in England, I was lucky enough to catch a matinee of *Run for Your Wife* during Paul's final week with the show. Afterwards, when I stopped by the stage door to say hello, I was amused to find five or six young ladies also waiting for him back there. British science fiction fans may indeed be more reserved than American fans, but not where Paul Darrow is concerned!

Michael Keating (*Creation Con, New York- 2/21/87*) must be a closet Californian; I don't think any Englishman can be that laid back. Michael, too, was a big help when we were getting started, and his goodnatured antics have enlivened more than one convention I've been to. I remember seeing Michael at Scorpio V's charity auction, autographing everything in sight: books, clothing, you name it, and I have no doubt that employees of the Hyatt Oak Brook are still finding Michael Keating signatures in the most unlikely locations...

This issue's interview with Michael shows a slightly more serious side of Vila's real life alter ego, one which is seen all too rarely. I think you'll find it interesting.

Jan Chappell/Sally Knyvette (*Scorpio V, Chicago- 8/1/87*). I have mixed feelings about this interview, which is actually more of a fan press conference than a one-on-one conversation. I generally shy away from these affairs, but I thought our readers would be interested in it. In addition, I'll have to admit that Sally Knyvette has the same effect on me that Paul Darrow has on many female fans, so I can honestly say that I didn't need much persuasion to sit in.

Now that I've just painted myself as a male chauvinist fanzine editor, I'd just like to say that Jan and Sally are both intelligent, well spoken, and charming, and if **Blake's 7** was being produced now, it would be quite exciting to see how the characters of Cally and Jenna would have turned out. I'd also like to mention that we have interviews with Jan and Sally in upcoming issues of the *Gazette*, so stay tuned.

Peter Tuddenham (*Scorpio V, Chicago- 7/31/87*) is one of the nicest **Blake's 7** guests I've ever had the pleasure of meeting, and it's a damn shame he isn't invited to America more often. I met Peter at Scorpio as I was setting up our dealer's table on Friday morning, and in my sleep-befuddled state, it took me a few minutes to realise who he was. I had a lot of fun

doing this issue's interview, although I wish I had an extra hour or two; I don't think we even scratched the surface of Peter's long and exciting career. After the interview, Peter and his wife, Rosie, joined me and several other fans for dinner, one which I will always remember. He kept us in tears with his hilarious stories, accents, and jokes, and we finally had to force him to stop talking for ten minutes so that he could finish his meal and get back to the hotel. Peter, I hope that someday we get that extra hour or two; I'd love to pick up where we left off.

Richard Franklin (*Panopticon Eight, London- 9/12/87*) is a very easy person to talk to, partly because of his goodnatured friendliness, but also because of his outspoken opinions about theatre, television, politics... whatever comes to mind. Richard is a big favorite at **Doctor Who** conventions (along with his stuffed companion, Teabag), and although his connection with **Blake's 7** is rather limited (a small scene at the beginning of *Aftermath*), he proved to be quite forthcoming with his time and his opinions. Richard too will be featured in *A Mouth on Legs* in the near future.

Brian Croucher (*BBC Television Centre, London- 9/11/87*) may look like the villainous Travis, but his real life persona is nothing like his **Blake's 7** alter ego. Brian is laid back and friendly, and, from what I could see, possesses a slightly skewed sense of humor. When I first wrote to him, asking him if he'd have time to do an interview while I was in Britain, I received a postcard from Italy, explaining that "everyone knows that Travis lives in Palermo!" After reading our interview with Brian, some readers may be a bit annoyed at the abrupt manner in which it ends; as you will see, we were interrupted by David Jackson, who, coincidentally, was at the BBC reading for the same part as Brian!

David Jackson (*Her Majesty's Theatre, London- 9/11 & 9/12/87*) was one of the reasons that my trip to England was so enjoyable. I met him at the stage door of Her Majesty's Theatre following his performance in *Phantom of the Opera*. David was extremely friendly, and although he apologized for not being able to talk that evening, he invited me out for a drink after the following night's show. During my week in England, we got together several times, talking about everything under the sun. David turned out to be a fan of old movies (as am I), a voracious reader (as am I), and a fountain of knowledge on theatre and old musicals (well, two out of three ain't bad!) As my vacation drew to a close, David managed to get me a ticket for *Phantom*, one of the highlights of my trip to England. That evening after the show, we conducted the first part of our interview together, which concluded the following evening in a car park in Picadilly Circus.

During my last night in England, I stopped back at Her Majesty's to say goodbye to David, and discovered that he had left me with a few books for my trip home, plus a thoughtful note saying goodbye. He wasn't sure that I'd be able to wait around, and left the note just in case. I did wait, though, and we went out for one last drink.

Although it seemed that I never stopped moving during my trip to England, there were a few times during that week that I wished I hadn't gone by myself. It's nice to have people to talk to, especially when you're in a strange place, where you know only a few people. I will always be grateful to David Jackson for making me feel welcome, and for taking the time to talk with me— not once, but several times. It seems appropriate that I end on this note, and I hope that everyone enjoys reading the interviews that follow as much as I enjoyed doing them. Once again, I'd like to thank Paul Darrow, Michael Keating, John Leeson, Jan Chappell, Sally Knyvette, Peter Tuddenham, Richard Franklin, Brian Croucher, and David Jackson. They're a special bunch of people, and I hope we've managed to capture a little bit of their magic in these pages.

Two for the Price of One:

Compiled and edited by Joe Nazzaro

Question: Did Cally or Jenna ever trust Avon?

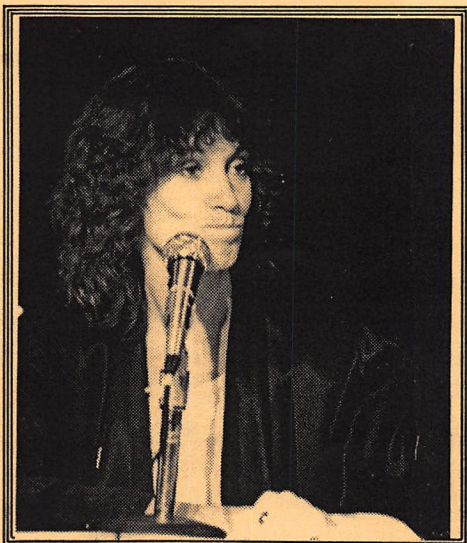
Sally Knyvette: I think there were certainly points at which Avon could be trusted, absolutely, otherwise I don't see that he could have survived on the *Liberator* very long. There were points at which we felt that he could be trusted... I think there were times when he was trusted wrongly; those were times that were occasional...

Jan Chappell: I think we trusted him up to a certain point.

Sally: Yes, we did. They always play on the friction between us; that was a constant factor.

Jan: There was often another way of doing things, as opposed to the different options.

Sally: I don't think that I ever really believed that he was directly in opposition to us, certainly in the first two serials...



Pat Armenia- Patented Photos

Jan: Not the second or third. I don't know about the fourth series! [laughter]

Question: Jan, I think you're the only member of the cast that played different roles in the series; specifically, relating to the alien one [in *Sarcophagus*]. You painted that as a tremendously strong character; you described your approach to the role. Was it a great deal of fun— what struck me about it was that it was vastly different from what Cally had become at that point, the strength...

Jan: How did I approach it?

Question: In contrast to... to bring out a very different contrast from Cally.

Jan: I think the fact that the script that Tanith Lee had written— it was very clear, it was a very clearly written, very strong script in what Tanith wanted from the alien, and what I contributed. I'd like to think that I did what Tanith wanted, because she had written a very excellent script, and if that came across, it probably had as much to do with her as me. There was also the makeup and the wardrobe, I think.

Question: You said at some point that you didn't like the way they interfered with your voice after you'd done it.

Jan: Oh yes, that was a bit of a shock, because one can't help being rather precious when you sort of work on a character. You are finding it a challenge, because in the particular circumstances in which you are playing a role, and within it, you're playing another role, so I was very aware of what I was and wasn't doing, so it literally came just as a shock, really, and I didn't like it, but

maybe because I was just unprepared for it. I had worked to put in much more control and strength, and all of a sudden, there's this blurby thing that had been done to it, and I thought, "Iccckk".

Question: While we have the two of you sitting together, I know Jan has talked about this before, but maybe you both can answer it: getting into the first couple of seasons of *Blake's 7*, the two of you had some problems with the way your characters were defined within the series. At the time, there wasn't much you could do about it, but looking back on it now, did you both have a few things that you would have done differently— had the series taken place now, knowing what you do now, how would you have liked to see your characters handled if you had a little more input with the writers and the producer?



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Sally: Well, this is very much the question I had yesterday on the panel, and it's a combination of things really, in the light of my own

An Interview with Sally Knyvette and Jan Chappell

personal experience working in the theatre and television; I feel that I would have had a lot more say in how I felt about how the character was developing. I would have questioned a lot of the test more; I would have questioned it, and offered up what I felt to be much better alternatives. I would have liked to have seen Jenna realize more of her potential. She started off as this really exciting intergalactic space pirate, and she became sort of a housewife on the *Liberator*. Not quite that, but she became very much a "Blake's sidekick", and my general sort of script per week were one-liners, and supporting remarks to the lads, and making sure I looked as sexy as possible. I think I did a little bit of teleporting; I usually had to fight for things like that, but I wasn't anything like what I had been conceived to be at the beginning. I think the relationship with Cally could have been more interesting, too. I think that became very sort of... it just sort of rested on this slight sort of antipathy, didn't it?

Jan: Yes, it did.

Sally: It didn't explain why it was there; nothing was really explained. They just sort of got on a particular level with me, and nothing went anywhere. I do think that a lot of that had to do with my not pushing more, and my not having the confidence to say, "Now look, guys, this is..."

Question: How would you have liked to see the relationship between Cally and Jenna develop?

Jan: It isn't how one would have liked, but the tendency was to suggest that they were... this is typical of a male chauvinist attitude that there will naturally, if there are two men and three women, the women will be competing for the men, and therefore, there will be an antagonism.

Sally: Which actually is not the case in the real fact of shooting the piece at all, was it?

Jan: Absolutely not! It's that rather tedious sort of cliched rubbish that...

Sally: One man and two women together, then...

Jan: Then they must be fighting, and we know from the series that it wasn't really explored, but it was suggested, because she looks at her...

Sally: We would have respected each other. She was an intelligent telepath from another planet, from which I

could have learned. I was a representative of Earth, and had all these powers as an intergalactic space... as a team, I reckon we could have gotten to Servalan within a week or two! The fact is, we were not given our voices; it's sad and simple as that. You never know, there might be a future.

Jan: Yes, I think they could have been a great team. There were odd opportunities, but if you think of the relationship that developed between Avon and Blake, or Avon and Vila, they were really developed, weren't they? Well, immediately you see that there was this kind of lack.



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Sally: And there was no humor, either; that's something I really got pissed off with, that there was one drama after the next, always trying to survive it, but I always felt something like *Star Trek* always managed to incorporate a lot of good subtle humor. My mother used to go berserk. She said, "When are you going to smile?" In 26 episodes, I smiled like twice in the whole thing. It was all very much on the one dimensional level.

Jan: Mind you, we're not knocking it completely.

Sally: No, no, no, you're asking us how we would have preferred it, and this isn't an ideal world.

Question: Part of it, though— if you look at recent science fiction films, they've had very strong female leads. *Aliens* had a very strong female lead, the new *Star Trek*, *the Next Generation* has three female "heads of state" or staff, and those characters are supposedly going to take the places that have been held by Spock and Bones McCoy. Perhaps now, do you think that if

you went back to it, would you have more... not only would you be more confident, but also, it would be more expected.

Jan: I'm sure mine was a lot more open to women taking a stronger...

Question: [to Sally] In an interview you gave last year, you said that you had thought perhaps directing or producing would be something that you wanted to go into more than acting.

Sally: Well, I still do.,

Question: Have you had any luck in that?



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Sally: Yes, I've just finished directing a short film; a civilian film, in fact, not a "film" film, but yes, it's taken me virtually a year to do it. It took a very short time to actually shoot, but it's taken a long time to edit, and to get finalised, putting the music on, etcetera. It's an adaptation of a Maupassant story that is now called *A Price on Love*, and it's actually again very loosely to do with the female situation. Maupassant was very perceptive about women. He had an enormous amount of relationships with women, and he respected their

innate wisdom, if you like, their ability to subtly work a situation to their own advantage.

Question: Will we get a chance to see that?

Sally: Well, you might. The fact is, it was shot on a non-union set up, and I have videos of it. I haven't shown it to anyone, and I would never have union clearance to sell this particular one. If someone picks it up and likes it, then I could reshoot it, but what I'd prefer to do actually, is to move on to another one. I've got six stories altogether, all of which have a very light, feminist theme, and package them as a series of six which would eventually get on television. It's my first attempt, and it's very hard to move across to directing when you've been acting, and been considered for a certain sort of image for a while. Then people don't take you seriously, so I thought that rather than keep asking if I could do this or that, or try to get an assistantship somewhere, it was better to start off and do something on my own.

Question: I would think an actor would make a better director, having been there.

Sally: I think it helps. I don't think it's utterly essential, but I do think you have much greater understanding of the very subtle problems that actors have, and I think that partly you have to have an overall conception of what it is you want to do, and partly you have to be an organiser, and partly you have to be very sensitive to the individual needs of the actor, and to know when to push, and when to draw out, and when to encourage. I do think women are pretty good at that. I've been in the situation with many directors who don't realise that they could get a lot more out of you if they handled you in a different way.

Question: With tact?

Sally: Tact, or just perceptiveness, and knowing how to take one person aside. I had a particular instance in this thing I did, with a girl who was very nervous to begin with, and got very fazed by the experience of the guy she was working with, and I could see that immediately, and it was just a matter of working with her quietly for two or three days, and building up her confidence. In the end, she was absolutely fantastic.

Question: [to Jan] Have you ever done anything like that?

Jan: Not professionally, no. Before I became a professional I did, and also I did since, with some kids. Over the years, I find it an increasingly attractive proposition to be in, because as time goes by, you get more and more dissatisfied with directors, and you have a feeling that you might feel even more fulfilled being able to direct a whole thing, as opposed to only having the ultimate control over your own role.

Question: And you're in effect playing all the parts as the director; you're saying, "I've got to, but once removed, play all the parts."

Jan: Yes, and once removed, and also having that overview, which sometimes some actors are able to see. Others aren't [able to see] the whole piece, and what is the point of the whole play, which can get lost, and you can have six actors deciding to play their role, completely forgetting what the writer is about, so it can get completely lost, which is the reason we often need a director.

Sally: It's an immensely demanding role, I think, if you do it well.

Jan: Yes, because it requires you to not only know what you're about, but also in terms of relating to people, the kind of confidence it requires, also the particular kind of sensitivity, because actors are often very different creatures from one another. They have very different reasons for being in the business; a particular point that needs to be made or encouraged, where somebody needs to be told, "Throw that away, it's rubbish; could you start that again?", and you have to have that particular, very mature personality to understand what is required at that particular point, so I think it is the most demanding job, and not to get paranoid in the middle of that.

Sally: In every cast I've ever been in, whenever things are going wrong, there's always a point when there's a crisis point in just about every production I've ever done, and it nearly always focuses back on the director. It's all his fault, and you've got to be very able to be sort of the other end of that elastic band keeping the tension in, and not blowing it, and realising that you've got to keep on going, but without becoming dogmatic or dictatorial, and saying, "Get out there and do it, no matter what." It's a very fine tuned sort of role, isn't it?

Question: I wanted to ask Sally if it's harder to take direction now that you've done it.

Sally: No, it's no harder. It's still got the same problems, and if I think I'm working with a lousy director, I get very frustrated, but I think there's so many lousy directors, to be honest, that I'm now beginning to quite quietly get out and do my own thing. That's what I think I wasn't able to do before, and I think that now I've got a much clearer view. I think that taking three years off and going to college, and really clarifying my own views on things, and giving myself confidence. I think it's allowed me to take what I want from a director, and the better it is, the more exciting... if it's something with a director I admire a lot. I think a good director can stretch you much further than you imagined you can go, but the average director just tends to get you out there, and [it can] be a little frustrating, in my experience. Yes, I hope I'm open enough to listen, and consider everything that's being told, and not to block it, but whenever I feel that whoever is, is not being helpful, then I will try and work it out on my own, and not give up.

Question: Jan, did your directory come out? [the rest of the question is inaudible]

Jan: Yes it did. It was published in March, and I understand that they did well, but I have not actually had recent contact, so I don't know how far the plans for having similar directories throughout— selling similar franchises throughout Britain, how that's coming on.

Question: As women in show business, how do you juggle that with home, and all of that?

Jan: Well, with difficulty. I have to be frank; I think it depends very much on the individual, how you cope. My way of coping since my son's been in school is actually very simple, because we used to take to the road for wherever I was going, like when I was doing **Blake**. We trudged with Nanny, and went on vacation, and since Sam's been in school, it's been much more difficult, because he has to stay at school, and I haven't been in

the position to have a sort of long term nanny that stays with us whether I'm working or not. It's very dependent on me working to have that, and that's not really quite the way I wanted it. Anyway, I've had to weigh my priorities, which has meant over the last five years, my career has gone [making downward motions] because I've been basically at home, and when I have an offer, I have to decide how much this is going to compromise my family life, and how much is it worth that compromise or not. Things are getting simpler now



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that Sam's older, but there were certainly times when I was very depressed, thinking, "God, I'm not working", and I had to remind myself that I had actually been able to see the Nativity play at school, and how would I have felt if I was somewhere out in the country, the nanny looking after Sam, and I hadn't been able to see the Nativity play. I think it's a tremendous struggle for women bringing up younger children, and I think they all suffer one way or the other— guilt, fatigue. It's a very difficult thing. I think ideally, when there's real work sharing, and men will stay home with the children, and you balance it that way between you, then I think everybody will feel

happy, but I think women still carry a lot of guilt when it comes to organising, and to also feel that you can lose out, and those years go so quickly, so it's very difficult, but as I say for me, it's worked out well. I know whatever position I'm in, it's the one I should be in, because I feel that I'm one with myself with the way I've been handling it.

Question: And Sam probably will appreciate it, too.

Jan: I hope so. I just hope he's not going to be a sort of frightful sort of mess as a teenager! *[laughter]*



Pat Armenia- Patented Photos

Sally: I have to think it's simpler for me. I don't have the responsibilities that I have to think about whether I go away or not. If I had a child, it would be much more difficult. As it is, this year, for six months I packed up, and I was on tour for 12 weeks, and I was away at another theatre for Christmas, but it's hard, and I've got a lovely house in London, and all my friends, and a lot of them are not in the theatre. I make a point of getting a real balance, because I think I'd go mad if I was entirely surrounded by actors. I love it, but I think it can be a very tightening, closing thing as well. It's difficult in terms of building solid relationships, I'll have to be honest; it makes it really hard. You can't hope to work on a good relationship if you're not going to be there half the time, and you really can't expect some bloke to go wandering around with you all over the country. I have a very independent nature, anyway, and as yet I haven't settled, but, yes, it makes it difficult. As time goes on, you think, "It would be nice to have kids, and it would be nice to have a more settled...", and that is an opposition, that the time is never right. You've just got to be hit by lightning, and put everything on ice, and that's what's important to go for. I haven't actually had that yet, but we'll see. It might be around the corner.

Question: Jan, when you decided that you would leave during the third series, was there a particular point where you said, "I've had it, I'm going", and what happened at the end of the series— sorry, the start of the fourth series, when I gather they were begging and pleading for you to A) go back, B) would you do a death scene, and then C) would you do it visually; and you finally got down to, "Well, I'll just do a couple of screams."

Jan: Well, I just sort of lost heart in the middle of the third series; I'd just had enough. It had been three years of my life; I had only one other job in the meantime, because I'd had about seven months of *Blake's 7*, and five months off with Sam, who was quite young then and I just got restless. I'm a Gemini, and one thrives on change, and I'd just had enough. Feeling that as strongly as I did, [even though] there were other attractions. There was security, there was financial stability that another series would offer; it was not enough. I knew I would be discontented, in which case it would be extremely hard work for me to sustain; it would just be impossible. You cannot imagine it. I had lost heart halfway through the series, wanted desperately to do something else. I was bored, and if you're bored with the character you're playing, you're not going to be around other people and enjoy it, and you're going to be a very destructive influence potentially, however hard you try not to. It's going to show, and reflect in your reactions to all sorts of things, so for everybody's sake, and my own, I left.

Question: What about doing the on-camera ...

Jan: I was asked if I'd do four episodes, obviously because they'd written the whole thing, and they asked if I'd do four episodes, and I said no, and there again, I think there was a professional reason, because there is this danger, and I've been quoted that you can get away with three series, but never do four series, because you will be stamped and remembered for that, and never ever work again. In fact, in many ways, I sometimes think what happened immediately after *Blake's 7*, which was very tough - I didn't do another telly for eighteen months - was a consequence of that, because it was like I had done four series, because you forget they repeat them, so there was a repeat of the third series, and so that was another reason for not doing any part of the fourth series, because I also think that if I appear to be in the fourth series... I wanted out completely, uncompromisedly.

Question: Was *Reilly, Ace of Spies* the next thing you did?

Jan: No, I did a *Crown Court* for Granada, playing a lawyer.

Question: Sally, you mentioned that you are in the—I don't know if you call it an enviable or nonenviable—position of not really having a lot of responsibilities right now. When you're not working, which is hopefully not that long a period of time, what do you enjoy doing with yourself? *[laughter]*

Sally: Well, I'll tell you a few of the things. I'm a great sportswoman; I play a lot of sports. I play tennis, competitively even; three-year finalist in the Equity Tennis Tournament, so I'm very keen on tennis.

Jan: Weren't you a ski champion?

Sally: Yes, I actually used to ski; I was a ski racer when I was a kid. I grew up in Switzerland, and until about the age of seventeen, was considering it as a profession. A lot of the girls from our school went on the British team, and then we had a real disastrous accident right in front of me, and that made me think twice about whether or not I was going to do it, which I didn't, but I still ski a lot whenever I can, or when I can afford it. I swim most days. I ride a bike. I love animals. I'm a keen gardener. I do other people's gardenings; that's one of the things I do when I'm out of work, is that I've got three very wealthy friends who give me five quid an hour just to go and fool around in their garden, which I love doing, because I have my dog with me and it's a really good antidote to this sort of world.

Jan: We have that in common; I didn't know that.

Sally: Oh well, darling, we'll go pot around in the garden together. *[laughter]* Yes, I'm a massive gardener, love it. I love going to the countryside; I'm also a hedonist at heart. I love going out, I go out far too much in London. I have to try and ration myself, staying in occasionally and getting early nights. I like drinking, I like going to the theatre, I like the cinema. There's a lot of things I do, but I'm very lucky. I've got a nice setup in London, and whenever I can, I travel. The last big journey I did was to Australia and Indonesia; that was actually the last term of my last summer of university. I thought, "Well, this is the last summer I'll be psychologically free to take three months off," and that was terribly exciting, wonderful. If I can go to somewhere big and unknown once a year, I want to go to Africa next, and then China. I love finding out about new cultures, so there's a few of my interests. Sorry, this is just early in the morning *[laughter]*; there's a lot I haven't mentioned. Would you like to ask Jan the same question?

Question: *[To Jan, repeating the same question]*

Jan: Well, yes, I love to travel, perhaps once a year. *[laughter]* I haven't had too many opportunities this year, except coming here. I've enjoyed this year, because I've been out of the country four times, which I think is a record, to actually have gone away. We went to France with my mother. My mother only recently moved, and we helped her. My brother took down the horsebox, we pulled it all out, we started digging the garden, and we had a wonderful year. I love travelling, and I always thought if I couldn't act, I would travel. When I left drama school, I didn't know what I thought I was going to do when I travelled. I thought I wanted to travel, but I didn't know how to get to it, or how I thought I would get the money to travel. It didn't seem relevant at the time. I didn't even get as far as thinking how I would earn it. Anyway, my hobbies are certainly gardening, and being in my garden. My son certainly occupies some of my time. I like playing music; I have a keyboard, I used to play the piano. I rather miss it, because a keyboard just doesn't feel the same. If I could get a really good piano for a very reasonable price... I like going to the theatre. I really enjoy my friends. I have a circle of friends, and we enjoy each other's company. We all go out for coffee or lunches.

Question: We're almost out of time, but the question we would like to hear is to hear your reactions to the fans.

Sally: I think it's... I haven't been here for two years, I missed it last year. I find it a lot more relaxing this year, and it's nice, because there's a lot of familiar faces. It's good, because I'm beginning to feel a personal contact with you all, which is very nice. There have been a lot more of you this year. Somehow, because we're beginning to figure out how the whole thing works, it's sort of easier to chat with you just on and off, and get to know you. I'm absolutely overwhelmed yet again. I just spoke to a friend in San Francisco yesterday, and I've forgotten—you forget, two years is a long time - I'd just forgotten how generous, how... literally, you put a hand out, and... there's nothing you won't do, it's incredible. It's certainly not like this at home. It's very touching, and we wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you, no question. Long may it continue; thank you all enormously.

Jan: Yes, I just want to say thank you. It continues to be a source of amazement that this many years after- it was 1981 when we last did it- and this many years on, this is happening, and I can't believe it. It's very touching that the program has made such an impression, very

humbling. I just don't understand it, but everybody has been so friendly; it's been terrific.

Sally: I'd also just like to say that I get wracked with guilt that thousands of letters I just do not answer. I just do not have time, but what is good about this is that it gives me a chance to meet people and talk to people. It's not actually that I'm rude, I just can't get around to doing it. If I had a secretary, if I had somebody to sit down and actually help me physically, then I would try and answer everything. I've got bags full of them. I keep intending to do it...

Jan: I've heard a very disturbing thing. Someone said to me, "How do you respond to the fan mail from the USA?" and I said, "Well, I actually don't get very much", so there is a feeling that there are sacks [of mail] somewhere at the BBC. I met somebody who went to the **Doctor Who** shop in the East End, thinking it was still open, and saw stacks and stacks just out in the street. It's still being delivered to the shop, because maybe they don't know where to send it, so I sometimes wonder maybe that there is mail that is coming through that's not ever actually arriving.

Question: Perhaps if people went through the agents, rather than through the BBC?

Sally: I go through my agent, quite honestly.

Jan: That's the best thing, but obviously I think that some of this stuff had been sent from the BBC on to the

shop, and things like that, so maybe your fanzines should mention that, so that fans who may be wrongly assuming they're not getting replies, it could actually be because these things do go astray.



Pat Armenia- Patented Photos

[Please note that this interview has been edited somewhat, partly for reasons of clarity and also because of the difficulty in transcribing two voices speaking at the same time. We hope our readers understand this, and we apologize for any words that have been omitted or inadvertently changed.]

An Interview with John Leeson

Conducted by Joe Nazzaro

Joe Nazzaro: What did you think about the cast members of **Blake's 7** that you got a chance to work with?

John Leeson: It's difficult to say. I never got to know any of them really in the same way as I got to know the **Doctor Who** set, because I was only guesting, if you like, and guests never actually get to be in the main thrust of things, so I can't really answer that one satisfactorily. I got on very well with Paul Darrow, for example, and Michael Keating. Jackie Pearce and I were at RADA together, so...

Joe: You've been asked many times in the past to explain the success of **Doctor Who** in America. Right now, **Blake's 7** seems to be experiencing the same sort of popularity here in the United States; are you at all surprised by that?

John: I don't think so. There's a quality about British television science fiction which is so un-American that it is instantly popular, because the Americans, for all their great technology and expertise, can't actually do it the same way. They could probably do it much better or much glossier or whatever,

but it's not the same. To me, one of the lovely things about the way that we do it is that you can almost see the "join". It's handcrafted; it's knitted in some corner of someone's back kitchen. That's underselling it dreadfully, but there's a warmth about it that I think a lot of the very high-tech, glossy, Hollywood-style sci-fi things miss. I think **Star Trek** had a bit of that quality going for it, too. It became a sort of family thing, almost, which was good. **Star Trek** was the nearest, I think.

Joe: Was there a different atmosphere, working on the set of **Blake's 7**, because of the higher production costs, and more expensive sets?

John: I think the main difference between the two was that **Blake's 7** aimed to exploit science fiction, whereas **Doctor Who** was actually science fantasy; in fact, the stories in **Blake's 7** had a much harder edge. In **Doctor Who**, the scripts gave the actors much more license to do anything, and go anywhere. It was more of a mind-expanding thing than **Blake's 7** was. **Blake's 7** was really cops and robbers in the sky to a certain extent. I think the dynamics were different; I think that was what it was.

The Gentle Giant of Blake's 7:

Conducted by Joe Nazzaro

Joe Nazzaro: As we're sitting here, you're just getting ready to leave *Phantom of the Opera*, which you've been involved with for some time. When are you planning on leaving the show?

David Jackson: The tenth of October, the same as Michael [Crawford].

Joe: And you'll have been there for one year?

David: A bit more than a year. I was going to leave at the end of September, and they said it would be helpful to them if I left at the same time as Michael, so there will be four of us leaving. We decided to stay the extra time and leave together.

Joe: What is it like being the most popular show in the West End; is there a sort of prestige being involved in a production like that?

David: Well, there is always that, but we were talking tonight about when we first saw the effects, and we first got the tears in the eyes when we saw the scenes coming in, and the costumes way back last year. By Christmas, you start to say, "Oh, we're five minutes overtime tonight, aren't we? We're five minutes late!" The people that want to go to the pubs say we're cutting down their drinking time, so it's like everything else. If you're in something which is a flop, you do your best with it, but after a few months... It's nice to be in a prestigious show. It's nice to have a lot of theatre people coming. Howard Keel came one night: we were more impressed with Howard Keel, I think, than anybody; not because of *Dallas*, which we didn't watch, but because of him being in *Kiss Me Kate* and *Kismet*. Most of the people in the show are trained opera singers, and it was a big thing. Alan Jones was in a couple of nights ago, and they were all very excited about that. I think the singers get more interested in, say, Placido Domingo coming to see the show.

Joe: Why don't we talk about the parts that you play in *Phantom of the Opera*?

David: I play Monsieur Lefevre, the character who owns the theatre, and sells it to its new managers, and wants to get away quickly before they find out that the Phantom is ruling the place. Tonight, we had a little accident on stage when I was introducing the two managers: my hand flipped, and his silver-headed cane went flying. That's not in usually; it sort of went flying into the footlights, the fake footlights.

Joe: It didn't seem very obvious to those of us in the audience.

David: No, it was just a flowing movement. It's really a chance to swirl around the back of the cape. He was wearing very heavy clothing and tight trousers, and it would have been a bit difficult to bend down and pick it up, so I scooped it up. We just altered the movements and the introduction positions to fit in with picking up the stick while we were swirling upstage and twirling around, so it fit in all right. When you've been doing the show for awhile...

Joe: You have to make do with whatever happens.

David: Actually it makes it quite interesting if something does happen. There's been a lot of things happening tonight. The double for the Phantom at the back of the masquerade, which you couldn't see; he almost got splattered against the wall. The masquerade steps, when they're flattened against the wall at the back of the theatre, they look like a Chinese junk; all the steps sort of flatten out. He was on a forklift at the back, and the steps were coming back to flatten him against the wall after the masquerade. It wasn't a nasty accident, but it could have been.

Joe: It sounds like you have your own Phantom working here.

David: There's always something happening. The Scottish play-people say that it's unlucky. One of the reasons that it's unlucky is that usually it's very dark, with smoke around; the same conditions that apply to our show. You've got trap doors opening up all over the place, so the first few weeks, when the technical staff are getting used to it, people are falling down trap doors, and the dummies, which have a heavy metal core, and they hold up the wings from the masquerade steps—one fell down, and just missed somebody; the stage weights went flying all over the place, and it's a very technical show. The people backstage have got to learn all the bits and pieces the same way that all the actors have got to know them, and when we meet together sometimes, something's flying past your head, or opening at your feet as you go by, and it's just one of those things. We haven't had so many since Christmas; we'd gotten used to it.

Joe: You also come back out in the second act as another character.

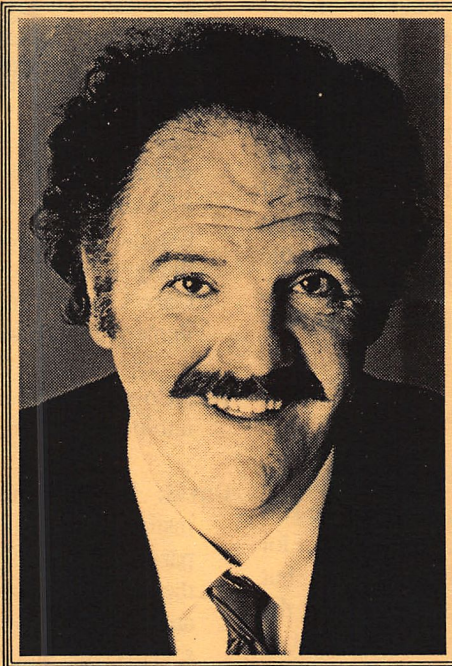
David: I come out in the masquerade as an evil clown, which is what I think they call it, and then I come back out as Chief of the Fire Brigade.

An Interview With David Jackson

Joe: Did you know when you began *Phantom* that you would be playing several different parts?

David: No, what happened was that I was up in Manchester doing some television, and they rang up. They'd been rehearsing about 3-4 weeks, and they said can you come up and see Ruth, who was helping Hal Prince with the production. She's his assistant on most of the things he does, and she said they were looking for somebody to play Monsieur Lefevre, and they kept seeing people, and she said, "What about David Jackson? He played Lazar Wolf with Topol in *Fiddler on the Roof*", and I was up in Manchester doing this television, and they rang up and said, "Hal Prince would like to see you", and I said, "I'm sorry, I'm filming; I can't see you", so they saw a few more people, and I came back to London after finishing the television, and they said, "We'd still like to see you, we're not happy with the people we've seen." I went along and read for them, and he said, "Can you start this afternoon?" It's pretty much the same size performance that I had in *Fiddler*, and that's it. He's loud, and he's a coward, and he's a bully and all that, and they said they wanted me to understudy another part, and also throw in the fireman for good measure, just to keep me in the theatre during the second half. It's a very easy show; very nice people, good costumes, and I helped the trained operatic singers out in the wings when they're bellowing their offstage choruses, which is also something that happened just before we opened. I've been doing music halls, mainly Victorian-Edwardian music halls for a couple of years. I did a film in Iraq, and when I came back, things were kind of quiet, and a friend of mine was running a music hall group, and he asked would I like to go and do some monologues. I don't know if you have them over in America, I think monologue in America is where you have a stand-up comic. A monologue in English terms is a sort of verse. Some of the bad ones are in a sort of doggerel, but the modern ones tend to be weaker than the Victorian ones. The Victorian ones are quite strong. The ones that I do are written by a man who used to write for *Punch*, and they were going down quite well, and he said, "Do you sing a bit as well?" So I usually ended up singing half a dozen songs, and doing a monologue, and it was quite fun, quite enjoyable. It didn't interfere with anything else, because it would sort of be for one night, and I could just go off and do it. I had about 70-75 numbers, and we used to try a number out to see if it worked or it didn't work, and now I've

got about five monologues that are about standard, according to the audience. You can gauge the audience during the first couple of numbers you do. I would say, "Oh, I'll do that one", so if you have an average audience, I would do *Burglar Bill*, about a burglar who breaks into a house, and is approached by the child of the house, who asks him to mend her doll house, because burglars can do this. It's a horrible child with a kind of lisp, and it goes down well, with any sort of audience. Then if you have a more intellectual audience you can give them Lewis Carroll, or if you have a cockney audience, there's one about a traveling showman who's just lost his leading comedian, who is a brindle canary, and he says about the last performance, "positively his last performance!" It's the last performance that the little bird gives, and it's lovely. The one about the doll's house finishes where the little girl gives him a crushed cake, and he goes home, sort of weeping for this little girl; clutching tenderly this little cake to his bosom as he falls asleep. According to the audience you have, they either laugh like anything, or they weep. There's a long one that's about forty minutes long that's about a man, a bachelor who receives the present of a doll, and he falls in love with the doll, and he's talking to it, and the doll talks. There's a little gramophone in the back, and she talks to him in this silvery voice, and suddenly the little girl who owns the doll, her grown up mother comes in, and says there's a little doll that's been delivered here by mistake, and he lies, and says no, there wasn't. When he hears the knock on the door, he thinks it's someone



Courtesy: David Jackson

coming for the doll, so he puts the doll under the cushion, and sits there, and when she leaves, he takes this horrible broken doll without an eye, and this silvery voice is [imitates a terrible scratchy voice] and he can't stand it anymore, and he burns the doll, and staggers forth, unable to look at the doll burning and melting. It's a weird one. It goes down very well, because you have to play it like John Barrymore in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. You have to do the full gestures, and also the nice thing about doing the monologues is that you can stage them yourself so that you become the various characters. At the same time, you are in the center, with the frock coat and the cravat, and you announce it in a very somber way, and then you become all the various characters, and when you are the narrator, you have the neutral. It's a different form of acting. You don't have very much chance to do it now. It's very handy, because it doesn't require any [props]. *The Batchelor* requires a chair, that's all. The other ones, they don't require anything at all, except your

hands, and maybe a handkerchief. [I also] sang with the straw hat and the lacquer cane with the silver top. There are some great songs out there; very smashing songs. You have to go through, say, a hundred to find a good one, and a possible, and you have to find scraps of old music books. When I was doing *Fiddler on the Roof*, we did a couple weeks on tour before we came to town, and I bought boxes and boxes of music, and when we came back, I went through them with the pianist, and most of it was rubbish, absolute rubbish; books and books of songs of songs, of old, faded scraps of stuff. I'm interested in a man named Fred Barnes, who is sort of the English equivalent of Al Jolson, but not as big. He was out in the outskirts of London, and he... they've all got tragic stories. Most of them seem to die very young. Fred Barnes— his mother committed suicide, and his father, who was quite rich, tried to persuade his son to give up the stage when he was discovered in Hyde Park, driving an unlicensed, uninsured motorcar, and the shame of his son going to prison for a few months made the father say, "Give it all up. I've got a pistol in my pocket; give it all up!" Fred went back to his hotel, locked himself away, and his father went back to Birmingham and committed suicide by going into the abattoir and chopping his neck. He left his son 80,000 pounds so that he would be able to give up the theatre. That was a lot of money in the to going around— he was a sick man at that time— going around the pubs and singing his old hits at the stage door for whatever anybody would give him. In the end, they wouldn't let him in the pubs, so he just had to sing outside and put his hat inside the door.

Joe: And you're trying to carry on in his tradition?

David: No, no! It's just that he had some very good songs; he had some smashing songs. They were very good, and are still very good, but you've got to discover them. There was a lot of ragtime in the '20's and '30's that has been all but forgotten. I've got people that work in the archives for the song publishers, and they try to find songs that might be of interest. I find that the ones before 1880 are really not my scene. They're too regular and a bit heavy, a lot of them. I found a marvelous number called *Desdemona*, and you're supposed to come out dressed in a Roman outfit with a lyre, and there's this terrible song to Desdemona, who's a Persian girl up in the balcony, and you're down below singing to her. It was written and performed by a man named Billy Mercer, and it's a really crazy number. It's a very silly song.

Joe: This whole area is something that you use as a diversion when the work is a little slow?

David: All acting, all entertainment is fun. As I was saying to you the other night, one week you're playing Monopoly, the next week you're playing Scrabble, and the next you're playing poker, or whatever you're doing. [David is referring to an analogy he had made about acting, where you begin playing Monopoly, but wind up playing Monopoly every

night. The next week you're playing Scrabble, and so on] It's fun, and each branch of the entertainment industry has a different set of problems or a different set of responses, so if you're playing for a wide-screen cinemascope camera, you



Courtesy: David Jackson; © BBC

don't play it the same way you do for television, or the same way as you'd play it for a music hall thing. What I'm doing in *Phantom of the Opera* is very large, isn't it? You saw it tonight, and you'd say it was out front and large. If you're doing a character who is "yup" and "nope", you think [of] Gary Cooper, and if you are doing, say, a monologue, you think of John Barrymore or whoever it is.

Joe: Do you put yourself in someone else's place, in order to get into the right frame of mind?

David: I don't think you do it deliberately. I think you instinctively adopt whatever technique is needed for the particular branch which you are doing. I think radio is about the best. I was doing a radio play the November before last, and I went along and I played seven characters. I played a seventy-year-old from Liverpool, I was a Scotsman, I was a young soldier of about eighteen. It's wonderful, you can be practically anything you like in radio.

Joe: Let's talk about *Blake's 7* for a little while. I noticed in the program for *Phantom of the Opera* that they list your role as Gan, while leaving out a number of your other credits, so evidently the part still follows you to some degree.

David: I think it does with program notes. I hate program notes; I think everybody in the company hates them. What they do is they approach the agent and say, "What's he done?", and the agent gives them a list, and they take anything that the company might have heard of and shove it down. I haven't read the program notes in the program, because I don't really recognize myself from what they say about me.

Joe: So when your agent said you played Gan in *Blake's 7*, that was one of the credits they made sure to include.

David: Does it say **Blake's 7**, or does it say Gan in **Blake's 7**? I usually leave the program notes to my agent.

Joe: It says, "...might be best known as D.C. Braithwaite in **Z Cars**, or as Gan in **Blake's 7**."

David: Oh, does it? Let's take a look at it. My God, it's very small! That's probably why I didn't read it, because it appears so small.

[At this point, the stage door manager kicks us out of the theatre so he can close up. End of Part I.]

Part II

Joe: Tonight, you told me to keep you to the point and stop you from digressing.

David: Well, the trouble is that, last night, I was very tired. I had been at it since 7:00 that morning with the BBC and everything, and by the time you came, I was...I've had only two performances today, so I'm okay.

Joe: When we left off yesterday, we had just started talking about how you got involved with **Blake's 7**.

David: Yes, which, as I was saying, was so long ago that you probably know more about it than I do.

Joe: Well, I'll just have to cue you along. When they were first casting the leads in **Blake's 7**, how did your name come up?

David: I was directed a few times by David [Maloney], and I knew David from a long way back. I met him when they were first starting to get the thing going, and I was directing a show and acting in another show at a little fringe theatre, and invited him along. It was one of those shows where everybody had glasses of wine on the first night, and we had a bit of fun. A year or so later, I was doing a show at the Royal Court Theatre, which was all in Russian, until I died and came back as a ghost, and then I spoke Cockney. Anyway, I told him to come and see the show, and I met Vere Lorrimer at the same time, and invited him to come and see it, so when they were looking around for somebody big who was able to fall about all over the stage, they thought of me, and I met Chris Boucher, and they said what a good idea for Gan, and that was it. I read the first four scripts and thought they were pretty good, except that in one of the original ones, Gan's wife and two children had been killed, and they changed it to "Gan's woman." *[laughter]* I thought it was a shame, because it piles on the agony a bit more if it was his wife and two children that were killed, and he had gone mad and gone berserk, and they put the limiter in his head. That seemed it be a viable proposition, but, in this case, it was "my woman;" a bit of John Wayne and Susan Hayward in *The Conqueror*— "You are much woman!" I think, from very early on, Michael Keating decided to call him Oleg C. Gan.

Joe: He was the first one to coin that name?

David: Yes, I think it was Michael. He decided it sounded like an American-type name, so he would have to have an initial, like George C. Scott— Oleg C. Gan. I had all sorts of ideas about him, like that his wife was a bit of a witch who was dealing in potions from outside planets and things like that, and they accused her of... we had a whole subtext going of all our characters, because we discussed them among ourselves, and I said that I'd like to think that it was still his wife and two kids in the back of my head, even though in the script it was just his woman. I think in episode three— I had hoped it would all go in the same direction as episode three, which I thought was a very good one for me.

Joe: You said that you had seen the first four scripts, so you had a pretty good idea of where the character was going.

David: Oh, yes, but I didn't appear in the first one. I offered to appear in the first one for nothing, when they all went on the spaceship, because I thought it would be nice to be in the first episode, and I said I would come on for nothing; I'll just come along for the day, but David said, "No, we'll get into all sorts of hassles with that because of equity rules, and because you're known from another television series. They'll see your face and it will get in the way." It was a fair point.

Joe: When you first started playing the part of Gan, did you have any idea that you would wind up as a glorified strongman, which you said was your complaint later on?

David: I had hoped, after reading the first four scripts, that they would remove the limiter, because in one of the scripts he says something like, "I have to go along with what Blake says, because I want to live." I thought that if they took the limiter out, he'd make a useful fighting force. He'd still have the moral guidance that his wife was a health food nut and wanting peace and all that sort of thing; he could still do that, and yet, when needs must, he could join in. There was an episode when he goes mad, and they were going to take the limiter out...

Joe: That was the first "Gan" episode.

David: That's right, but I think, originally, they were going to have two Gans or something. They were going to have two Gans fighting each other after another Gan suddenly came up, but Vere didn't like the idea, so instead we got *Breakdown*, where he goes mad and the limiter is pressing on his brain, and we have to take the limiter out. In the end, they just eased it, and it was still there.

Joe: Was *Breakdown* a consequence of your saying that you wanted to do more in the series, or had that story been written for some time?

David: I don't know; it's such a long time ago. In every show that you're in, in every film, television, stage show, what have

you, anything that goes on for longer than a couple of weeks, you can never really say how things are going to develop. You might get audience research saying that they don't like this character, or they do like this character, so you don't know what's going to happen. You just go along and hope, and if it doesn't work out, you just nip off to something else.

Joe: What sort of chemistry did you find amongst the other actors during those early days?

David: Very smashing; it was really great. We really cared for each other, because there were a lot of strikes at the time. The electricians and cameramen, I think, were having an industrial dispute, and on one or two occasions the plugs were pulled because of the dispute, and on other occasions, we couldn't go into overtime because we had too many overtime sessions. I think one week in the studio, we had to finish off something like three or four episodes, and it was a bit hairy, but we cared very much for each other, because of all the strain around, and they were all very nice people. We had nice people coming on to guest, and the thing is... I saw an interview with some people from *The Follies*, and they said that the press was always trying to get stories about actresses tearing each other's hair out and hating each other, and when I think of all my years in the business, I can only think of five or six people who I wouldn't like to work with again, and I think that four of them have left the business anyway. Most actors like working. They like investigating the characters they're playing, they like being with other actors, and they become like happy children playing, and it's fun. That's the problem with *Equity*: they can't get the wages up, because if they go on strike, nobody wants to strike, because they're having too much fun.

Joe: A few days ago, you were telling me that, as *Blake's 7* went on, they were inserting little changes into the story to give you something to do, like knocking down a door, or something along those lines.

David: Vere Lorrimer was wonderful, because he said, "You have nothing to do here; we'll give you a scene where you plant a bomb, or knock out a guard, or something like that." They were quite good in that they put in bits of action for me. I think the problem is that when you're used to playing people with lots of chat, when you come in to rehearsals, and you don't have much chat to do, you get sort of—bored isn't the right word. You start filling up your day with crossword puzzles and chatting with people coming in. Anyway, as I said, it's such a long time ago, and it's really not worth considering it now. A lot of water has gone under the bridge.

Joe: So when the second season started, and the show came to *Pressure Point*, which was going to be Gan's last story...

David: Oh, no, I knew before we started the second series.

After I finished *Blake's 7*, I went straight into some episodes of *Z Cars* as Braithwaite, then I did some radio, and then I went up to the Lake District to make a sort of horror film about some guys who break out of a lunatic asylum and acquire a school girl whose bus has broken down. I was playing someone rather like Terry Thomas, but he's killed somebody; we're never quite sure. I decided he'd killed his mother, and I had lots of scenes rushing around with a shotgun, with his person—he was an American...

Joe: I like how, when you start talking about how psychotic he was, you remembered he was an American! [laughter]

David: He had some ideas for introducing new lines. Somebody goes by with an ax in his head, somebody's throat is cut, somebody is burned alive, and he says, "My God, it's like Central Park, New York out here", but the director says, "You can't say that", and he said "Why not? It's true", and he said, "Yes, but let's stick to the script." In the end, I had fired off both barrels at him and shot him in the arm and the leg, and then the bullets were gone so I suddenly produced a two-foot blade, which I had picked up in the kitchen, and I was about to stab him in a sort of ritualistic, sacrificial way as he was lying on a log, and the schoolgirl appears from behind a tree with a sickle in her hand and slashes my throat, and there were about two bottles of "Kensington gore" on the front of the outfit I was wearing, so that's the sort of movie it was. Anyway, I came back from there, and I think from the end of the first season [of *Blake's 7*] until the second, I only had a couple of weeks off. I came back to London, and David said, "Can I just have a chat with you? We're going to kill off one of the characters, and we thought Gan was the best to go", and I said, "Okay." I think I had mentioned earlier that he said there were four or five episodes, and then he's killed.

Joe: It wasn't a big deal to you by this time?

David: No, we had done thirteen episodes of the series, and while he had the limiter in his head, there was nowhere for him to go. If you've got an action show, you've got to have an action character. I think in one of the episodes he was going to be this sort of doctor type, and that would have been interesting, but because Avon kept making comments about him being a cretin and brainless, he either shrugs it off and says, "That's Avon", or he hits Avon on the snoot, but that wasn't in the script, so you play what you can.

Joe: Was it nice to have the big death scene at the end?

David: Brian Blessed, who was in episode three, said, "I hear you're leaving", and I said, "Yes." He said, "Are you going to have a good death scene?" and I said I didn't know, so he said, "Well, in a death scene, you've got to drag it out, so there's not a dry eye in the house", and I said, "Well, I'll just do as I'm told." We did the death

scene, which was where a big door comes down and crushes me, I think...

Voice over the PA system: This is Avon speaking. It is now 10:56, and very shortly now the pubs will close!

David: Anyway, they just had to get the thing finished by 10:00, and we had three minutes or something like that to do the death scene, so we did it. We couldn't go into overtime, we couldn't get another studio day; it just had to be finished by 10:00, and that was it. To use another cliché, "You cut your suit by the length of the cloth."

Joe: You also mentioned that you continued to watch the show from time to time after you left.



Courtesy David Jackson; © BBC

David: I certainly watched the episodes to the end of that series. I think I watched part of the next series, because I was popping in and out of the BBC. I was doing a comedy series called **Potter**, and I was seeing a lot of people in the show, because on one of their studio days I did a play for **Today**, and then I went off to do some filming in Ireland for a while, so I didn't see a lot of the fourth series. I then went off to Baghdad to do a film, and before I left I bought a big new color television and video unit...

Voice over the PA system: David Jackson, you are the last one in. Please call the stage door manager.

David: Why don't we finish this off in the car park so he can lock up?

Joe: Let's finish the last minute or so on this tape, and then we'll leave.

David: Right. So Ann recorded the last episode of the series for me, where Gareth comes back scarred and deformed, which I thought was very good. As I say, it's all very hazy, because when I came back from Baghdad, we had all this

snow. We were out in the middle of the desert in this big holiday camp, where the people from Iraq would go for their honeymoons. We were sitting there eating fresh grapes and drinking white wine, and I went up to my room and turned on the television set, and suddenly there was news from England and they said there was snow everywhere. I went back and told everybody, and we phoned home to see that everybody was all right, because this was December. When I got back, Ann said, "Here's the last episode [of **Blake's 7**]", but I had about three days' fever when I got back, because of the change in climate. I think it was actually the stress of flying, because we had to go across Jordan by bus and get a plane from Jordan.

[At this time, we leave the theatre and head for the nearby car park. By the time we get there, our conversation has shifted a bit, and we start talking about David's young son, Stewart.]

Joe: So your son is almost two now?

David: And he's already three- to four-year-old clothes.

Joe: You mean three- to four-year-old children, I assume.

David: Yes, he's three foot tall and he's between two-and-a-half and three stone. He's twenty months now, and it looks like he's going to be about six foot six. He's thinned out a lot since he started running around; he never stops. He's a good kid. He does a very good Al Jolson, too.

Joe: You don't black out his face, do you?

David: No, but he does "Mammy" and "The sun shines east, the sun shines west". He hasn't got the finish, though. It's his party piece. He goes around to my brother's house... Anyway, back to **Blake's 7**. Do you want to talk about after **Blake's 7** now? I think we've more or less finished that.

Joe: Certainly. I think you mentioned that, after **Blake's 7**, you moved right into something else.

David: I only had one quiet time, which was in the beginning of '82, when I came back from Baghdad, I think when **Blake's 7** had finished. That was when I went into the music hall thing. It was a very quiet time. I don't know what was on, but I think the BBC was building a car park or something, but suddenly there were a whole lot of things that didn't happen. I was up for about three or four things and held out for them, because I had quite a bit of cash from [the previous work], and, also, I was working on the house. I had bought a house in 1980 which was derelict; three stories, and we had to work hard to get it shipshape. We practically had to replace all the timber. The bricks were all right, but our garden [laughter]... Buried in the garden were seventeen bicycles and a 1950's Vespa motorcycle! That's

what it was like, and after I cleared it down to a level, I then had to dig down four feet into concrete and wire, which had been there, I think, from before the second World War, so that I could fill it with soil and a sunken lawn, which was nice.

Joe: So that was your quiet time.

David: That was my quiet time. [laughter] And then it was the end of March, the beginning of April, when I started off doing television and radio (again), and a couple of commercials. There were all sorts of things. In '81, I held myself out for the Baghdad film which was going to start, and then it was put off, because of the Iranian plane sweeping down over the main street, and I didn't go out there until later. I was doing an ex-boxer, **Stitch Peters**, for the BBC; I did a couple of episodes of that, and then I was asked to come in at Her Majesty's for *Fiddler on the Roof*, and I played Lazar Wolf, which took me until Christmas, so that was about nine months. After that, I went up to Bristol to do some stuff; I haven't even seen that yet. It's only been shown in the West Country.

Joe: What was that called?

David: It was called **The Function Room**, and our episode, which was on film, had a very, very good director. It was called *Pie Noon*, and it was about a pie-eating competition. I had to eat something like seventy-eight pies to win, and I lost, because the other fellow—I think he had a heart attack, because he won the competition! It was a sort of sendup of *The Hustler*, and it was very funny. I had to eat in bits and pieces, because you have a spitbowl there, so when the camera goes off... because you can't actually eat seventy-eight pies, because if you eat seventy-eight pies for the record, you have to eat several hundred. I think I actually ate something like seventeen pies in bits and pieces, and I wouldn't touch a pork pie for about a year after that. I think the next interesting sort of thing I did was something you'll see in America, called *Edge of Darkness*.

Joe: That's now being shown on different PBS stations in America.

David: I played the guy in charge of the NATO conference. It was very good. It won a battery of awards over here, and it had a very good script, very tight. We had a special viewing of it, and seeing it on the big screen with an audience glued to their seats from 11:00 in the morning until 6:00 at night...

Joe: How many episodes was the actual series?



Courtesy David Jackson; © BBC

David: I've got it on two tapes, so I think it was about six hours. It was very good, with a very good director. That takes up to '85. In '85, I did another episode of **Minder**. I did a good **Minder** after **Blake's 7**, and they asked me to go back and do another one with a different sort of accent and face. The first time, I did a sort of London with a very slight lisp, and he was mentally about twelve, the character, but he was very large. He was a comedy character. Then, in the next one, there was another recidivist. He was—I don't know how old he was—he was a religious psalm singer, and he had been in prison and I think he was slightly mad. In his spare time, he liked painting angels and religious things on any bit of wall he could find. He's hired by Arthur Daley, who's the car salesman/crook, with five other recidivists to steal a rock garden, and he has to dig a hole... I had this hole, which went down about ten feet, that I was digging, and every now and again I'd come out of this hole. It was a quite funny character. Jimmy Booth was in it; I think you might know Jimmy Booth from America. There were some lovely people in it, and it went down quite well. I then did a few comedy programs, and since '82 I've been doing some lecturing and music hall stuff. It's all quite fun. When the baby was expected and then arrived, that seemed to take up a lot of time! It was even more interesting than going off and doing something elsewhere. As I say, I've been a year in this [*Phantom of the Opera*], and I've done some stuff for Granada. Things seem to go in spurts in this business; sometimes you're working a seven-day week and you can't get away, and then, other times, you'll have a couple of months off, you can try all sorts of little things and work on the house. I think it's good to have a holiday, to go off to Crete or Portugal or wherever. It's also marvelous with Stewart, seeing him and his reaction to everything. He had hysterics

him and his reaction to everything. He had hysterics yesterday, because we were driving along and a fire truck came belting by us, and I had to do some dangerous things and some skids and everything to get us out of the way of this fire engine, and he thought it was the funniest thing in the world. He cheered and thought it was very funny. Everything is absolutely fantastic for him, no matter what. If you open a bottle that's got champagne in it, and it spurts out all over the place, that, to him, is the most wonderful thing that ever happened, and he's at such a good stage at the moment.

Joe: Now that you'll be leaving *Phantom of the Opera* shortly, what do you have planned after that?

David: Well, there's some Northern Television stuff which is in the offing. As you know, we met at the BBC today and we were discussing it...

Joe: What was the part that you and Brian Croucher were trying out for yesterday? It seemed very strange that the two of you would be trying out for the same role.

David: That's four— excuse me, five leading characters in the situation comedy. There's the fellow that starts the neighborhood watch, and his sister, who's older than he and is a sort of vamp from down the road; a sort of man-chasing blonde. There's a cheeky garage-worker attendant, and then there's this fellow who's moved in next door. He's a burglar alarm salesman, but the director described him as the sort of fellow who came out of the RAF after the war. It's a sort of stock figure in British comedy; slightly vague, very British.

Joe: Is there a lot of farce in this series?

David: I don't know. They've only got two scripts written. They're going to do a pilot, and then...

Joe: That was the pilot you were reading for?

David: That's right. This burglar alarm salesman can be played in three different ways, so they've got three actors, Brian Croucher, me and another fellow who I don't know. What they're trying to do is "balance" the show. If they use the little cheeky boy, who looks about sixteen but I think is about twelve, they will probably go for a shorter man for Pitt. If they choose the other boy, who is about five foot nine or ten... but then again, they've got three people for the blonde lady, and they're just juggling this weekend, but I've got lots of other things.

Joe: What is the name of this series, in case it should ever come to America?

David: I don't think it's the sort of thing you'll see in America. I think it's very British. It's the sort of thing that sells to Sweden and Belgium and Holland, because they love that sort of thing. It is not the sort of thing you will ever see in America, honestly. You have things in America which are never brought over here; we just don't see them, because they say it's too American. You'd understand it, but it's all very British humor; it's very lightweight. It depends on raised eyebrows and sniffs of the nose, so instead of being something direct and forceful, there's a lot of little whimsical stuff, and I don't see that— I may be wrong— but I don't see it as the sort of thing that would go down in America. There are no car chases, and...

Joe: Are you saying that's what Americans are into?

David: Well, no, but an awful lot of stuff from you... a lot of the humor shows that we get from you are fairly sort of socko. They're marvelous shows: *Cheers*, *Taxi*,



J. Nazzaro

L.A. Law, which I think is very funny. I could see a situation comedy of the little Jewish guy and the woman he's married to in real life. They're a wonderful pair, and their scenes you could take out and put them into a situation comedy. This, as I say, is a very English comedy, and there are no jokes in it as such. We have a lot of shows like that, that I've been in, which never go to America. I never get repeats on those, but I've gotten a lot of repeats on *Edge of Darkness* and thrillers that I've been in. I don't think *Minder* has been over there, because I don't think

you'd understand the dialects. It's funny, because my sister lives in Rome, and she says when the thriller that I was in, when I was playing someone a bit like John Steed in *The Avengers*— everything is dubbed in Italy; they have a whole vast dubbing industry over there that was laid down by the government many years ago. After the war, everything had to be dubbed into Italian with no subtitles, so they have some very good dubbers over there, and my sisters said that when you see *Dallas* in English, it isn't half as good as it is in Italian, because Victoria Principal has this wonderful rich voice, and when you see it in English, this little tinny voice comes out.

Joe: All of a sudden, she becomes Sophia Loren.

David: Well, she has this glorious voice. [My sister] said, "When you played in *Thriller*, you had this fine, deep baritone, and then suddenly, you were playing this character in *Minder*, which is Cockney, and then you had this strange tinny little voice that they gave you." She then said, "I suppose when your next *Minder* comes over, you'll have a similar sort of thing." Usually, you'll get an actor who's in a few things... They have a certain actor who does your voice, and she said, "I guess you'll have two voices." I think when you have people like Olivier or Richardson, they will have someone for the big stars. One of the fellows who was in *Phantom of the Opera*, he was dubbing Paul Hogan in something, I think. I don't know what it was, whether it was a commercial or what, but he was called in because they couldn't get Paul Hogan, and it's easier to get someone to come along and do it. I think the Italians have an absolutely superb dubbing industry. I did some dubbing on that Baghdad film. I went along and played something like twenty-eight voices. We all went along, because they had all these wild tracks which they couldn't use, and they had Iraqis playing English parts, so they had to put in different "English" soldiers. There were about five or six of us there, and we just did different voices and knocked it all off.

Joe: Let's talk about the future a little bit. You've worked in several different areas over the last several years, but is there anything that you still have your eye on?

David: I'm happy to go from one thing to another. I don't want to be nailed down for too long. What I would like to do... I've done quite a few films over the years, but I've never really had a big part in a big film. The film's that I've done have been smallish films, or have been tiny bits, and a lot of them have wound up on the cutting room floor. A whole scene would go out the window for one reason or another; they'd say, "You

can't have this scene with two hundred extras and six horses," and they would cut that. The parts that aren't written, but I'm there on contract for thirteen weeks, I go on camera for two or three days. What I'd really like would be a good part. Actually, what I'd really like would be a good script, a good script in radio, television, theatre or whatever. I'd rather have not such a good part in a really good script than to lead in rubbish. I do find that if you are in every day, working in front of the camera, you learn to do less, which I think is a good thing for me, because most of the parts that I've played have been over the top; they've been your wrestlers and your boxers, and a scarred face, and they've all been fairly physical. Every now and again, it would be nice to play an ordinary human being who is just an ordinary guy. I don't seem to get too many parts of ordinary people, and I think I'd like that. I'd certainly like a part in a film where I'm able to do what Jack Lemmon says, that "a little is good and less is better." I know where the camera is, and I know what to give for a long shot, and a tight closeup, but there's a certain mystique of the camera that I still don't act for the end of my nose. I still think that six foot is better than the end of my nose, and I know that in a lot of cases, it isn't. I think in a lot of cases, you can certainly withdraw yourself without losing the performance. I tend to play characters who jump in through a window, or spring into a room, and it would be nice to actually turn the handle and open the door, walk in, close the door behind me, and be wearing a suit rather than a piece of armor. At the moment... on Wednesday, I started not eating. When I say "not eating," I mean I have one meal a day and liquids. Every couple of years or so, I decide to lose a chunk of weight. The last time I got my weight down quite a lot was in 1980, when I lost a couple of stone. It's crept up a bit back to where it was before the diet, so I'm at it again to take a couple of stone off.

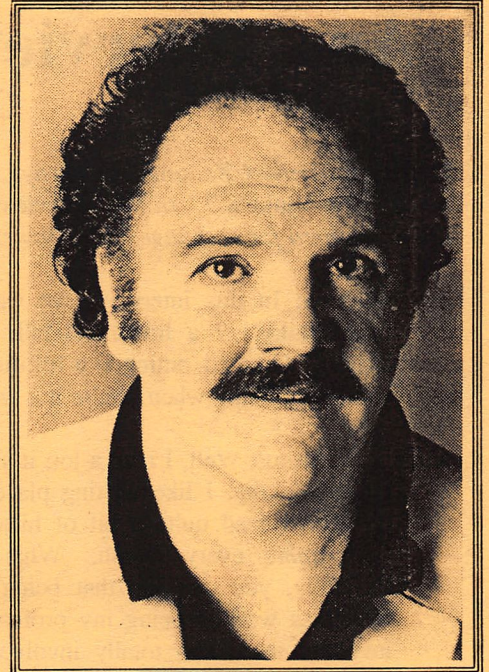
Joe: Are you doing this for any particular reason?

David: It's like shaving off a beard or moustache, or having your hair cropped. It's just for a different image. Being at Her Majesty's Theatre, we've been having the movement in ballet classes, in which I'm already good [laughter], but I go along to move about, rather than to do the technique of the ballet. I went along to the gym before this, and I found that was quite helpful, and I went along to a few movement classes, which was a godsend when it came to doing the masquerade; I was supple enough to fit in and all that. When you are doing a set number, or set exercises, the weight goes in one way, because you're not doing anything new, and you finally need a new way of doing it. It's the same thing when you go to the gymnasium; you find you're

lifting a couple of hundred pounds, and unless you concentrate on making an effort of it, you're just lifting up and down, and your body does it all economically and instinctively, and it doesn't take anything out of you, so it doesn't help all that much. I find it very boring, and, as I say, being in the show... a diet is good every now and again, because it helps clean out the system. When I get my weight down to fifteen stone, though, I get a bit short-tempered [laughter]. Fifteen nine, I'm about the same size as Cassius Clay in actual structure. I don't know what weight he is at the moment, but when he was fighting, he was about fifteen nine, so what I call "swimsuit" is fifteen nine. I think I was about seventeen-and-a-half when I was in Blake's 7.

Joe: So right now, you're in the middle of the David Jackson Improvement Program.

David: It's not an improvement so much; it's just something different. I think it's very bad to get stuck in any sort of rut of any kind. If someone said to me, "You're going to play Hamlet for the next ten years, and you're only going to have to do it for six months of the year, but every year you're going to play Hamlet", I'd say, "Aagggh!" Hamlet is a part with a hell of a lot of wrinkles in it that you can investigate. It's the fun of acting that you really miss when you're not working. That's why doing a music hall thing, or being asked to direct a play or something, it's fun. I think that's what it's about, because if it isn't fun, you might as well be earning a decent living as a bank teller or an accountant.



Courtesy David Jackson

An Interview with Michael Keating

Conducted by Joe Nazzaro

[Although Michael Keating has always been generous with his time in giving interviews, most of his answers have dealt mainly with *Blake's 7*. In this interview, conducted at a recent Creation convention in New York, Michael talked about his life off camera for a change: his hobbies, his love of literature, and, yes, *Blake's 7* has a way of creeping in, doesn't it?]

Joe Nazzaro: In this interview, we wanted to steer away from *Blake's 7* a little, and talk about your life off camera. Granted, acting is a full-time job, but what do you enjoy doing when you're not working?

Michael Keating: Well, I read a lot; it's quite boring, really. I like walking, I like visiting places, I'm interested in history. I read quite a bit of history. I get *National Geographic* every month. What do I like doing? Basically, you can say that being an actor is also a hobby as well as being my profession, and when I'm involved in it, I'm totally involved in it. When I'm not, I'm either looking for work, or I'm about to start it, so that takes up some of my time. I love walking. One day, I have an ambition to walk the Appalachian Trail; that walk goes up 2,000 miles. I think I might try that; it'll take a year or so out of my life.

Joe: During a previous interview we did together, you told me that you wanted someday to play Peer Gynt.

Michael: Yes indeed. I'll tell you why, because when I was a teenager at a very impressionable age, I saw *Peer Gynt*. I was fourteen, in London, at the Old Vic Theatre. There was a wonderful actor playing Peer Gynt, and I just thought, "that's what I want to do someday." Whether I'll ever play Peer Gynt or not, I don't know.

Joe: So this was not from reading the play, but rather ...

Michael: No, it's from seeing it back in 1961, I think it was. I was still in school, and it was a Saturday, and I went up and I spent all my pocket money, and it's a very long play, and I got home very late. I think my mother thought I'd been going out on the town, maybe with the girls drinking; I don't know.

Joe: But you were seeing a play?

Michael: I was in seeing the classics.

Joe: What do you enjoy reading?

Michael: I enjoy anything and everything. I go through

phases. I enjoy reading a lot on the second World War; that interests me quite a bit. What am I reading at the moment? I'm actually reading a book on spying. It's slightly fictional, but it's factual. It's by... he exposed to the British public one of our spies from several years ago, a man called Blunt. We had a lot of problems back in the '50s with spying. A lot of men that had gone to Cambridge University as young men between the wars had been involved with Russia. Well, this guy Blunt was known as "the Third Man." Anyway, I digress. Chapman Pincher was his name, the man who wrote this book. So, I'm reading his stuff. I'm interested in anything. I read a review, and then I get hold of it.

Joe: Are there any American authors that you're especially interested in?

Michael: Yeah, you bet. John Steinbeck, I'm very keen on him. Alas, he's now dead. A great author.

Joe: You seem to lean more towards classical literature. What about contemporary authors?

Michael: I'm trying to think of the name of the man who wrote *Regiment of Women*. [Thomas Berger] He also wrote a book which they made a film of, called *Little Big Man*. But anyway, he wrote this book called *Regiment of Women*, and I read it, and I thought, "I don't know how you'd ever film it, but I'd love to be in it."

Joe: Did you ever see the film adaptation of *Little Big Man*?

Michael: Yes, I did, some time ago. Excellent, but there again, a wonderful actor.

Joe: Do you get to the movies very much?

Michael: Yeah, from time to time. I'm madly trying to think of the last film I saw. I saw *Soul Man* on the plane. Have you seen that yet?

Joe: I saw it some time ago.

Michael: Did you like it?

Joe: I wasn't able to believe in it as much as, say, a film like *Tootsie*, where you were able to believe in Dustin Hoffman in the part. Actually, I get the impression that you'd rather sit back with a good book, rather than going out to see a film.

Michael: I probably lead a very boring life, I suppose. I like to take it as the mood takes me. I never plan anything. I take each day as it comes.

Joe: I notice the one area of acting you haven't pursued is in film. Is that a deliberate move?

Michael: It isn't deliberate at all. It's just that nobody's offered me much at all in the movies. There aren't many movies being made in Britain; actually, it's very bad for British actors. I did one movie - I think I told you that before - about Julius Caesar, but I haven't actually done much. I've done mainly theatre. I guess I'm a character actor. Perhaps in the next five or ten years, the movies will open up.

Joe: Are there any film actors whose styles you enjoy that you'd like to work with if given the opportunity?

Michael: Jack Nicholson I'd like. I used to like Marlon Brando, but I suppose he doesn't do much work. Dustin Hoffman, I think, is a very fine actor. George C. Scott. Walter Matthau. Jack Lemmon, a wonderful, wonderful actor.



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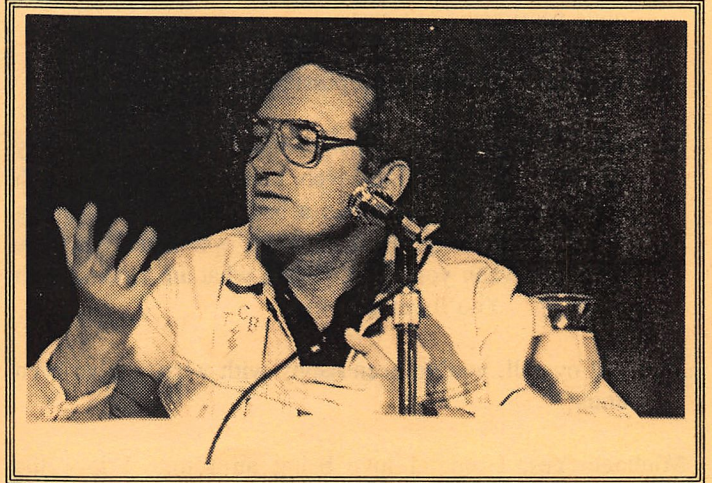
Joe: Are there any directors you'd like to work with?

Michael: Isn't that dreadful? I can't remember. I worked with John Schlesinger in the theatre actually, at the National. I'd like to work with him in the movies, but

they don't employ me in the movies.

Joe: Let's change the subject a bit. You're a "single parent" of sorts.

Michael: Yes, I'm divorced, and my daughter lives with my ex-wife, so yes, I am a single parent, I suppose.



Pat Armenia- Patented Photos

Joe: Is that a difficult situation for you?

Michael: Being divorced? It's not easy. I don't think anybody who's gone through it finds it easy. It's quite tragic, in its own way. It doesn't have to be; I have a good relationship with my daughter and my ex-wife. Strangely enough, the breakup of my marriage started through *Blake's 7*, but I wouldn't say it was *Blake's 7* that broke it up. I had a very good friend in Paul Darrow and his wife, who were good to me, and my ex-wife in fact, when we were busting up. They were good listeners, and Gareth as well was very kind. They were a good team to go to.

Joe: Was it a tough situation to adjust to, going from married life to...

Michael: Yes, to begin with. It's now been some time, but yes, it's a horrendous experience for anyone to go through, I think. But you cope, and I'm a darn sight happier than I was some years ago.

Joe: I guess you're a spontaneous person; it's nice not to have those restrictions, but sometimes one likes to have something to anchor him down.

Michael: Yes, I feel favored in marriage, really over my daughter. It was my daughter who I felt for very much, but she seems to be a happy person, and I get to see her when I want. I'd lay down my life for her; that

should be the role of a parent. She knows I love her. It's not easy; I don't think it can be that easy, being married to an actor. It was a lot to ask of any woman, being married to me, but also the fact that I'm an actor as well: going through unemployment, going through depression about being unemployed sometimes, of having doubts about yourself, and you're working, and you're away a lot. It's not easy at all. I suppose I get quite pessimistic at times.

Joe: You don't strike me as a pessimistic person.

Michael: Well, you have doubts about yourself; it's only natural. I realize that, even though I'm old enough now, whenever you go into a bad patch, it's not going to last forever, so... Basically, I'm optimistic, but there are times when you think, "God, what am I doing with my life?" You'll get that, too.

Joe: But overall, you've been happy with what you've been doing?

Michael: Yes, I am. I love being an actor. I love the company of actors, and this is a bonus to me, that through **Blake's 7** I get to come over to America to see quite a lot of your country, really; to do these extraordinary weekends.

Joe: For someone who likes traveling, you can't ask for much more.

Michael: Yes, I do like traveling. I just wish I didn't get the jet lag. You have to pay for it somehow.

Joe: I'd like to get back to **Blake's 7** for a bit, but instead of dealing with specific details, maybe we discuss some of the personalities involved with the program.

Michael: Well, the overriding man who made quite an impression on me, and gave a large stamp to **Blake's 7**— apart from Terry Nation, who created it, but wasn't around at rehearsals all the time - the man who made a big impression on me was Vere Lorrimer, who, I think, directed twelve episodes. He virtually directed the entire series; he directed four of each of the first three seasons, and then he produced the last season. He was a lovely man. He's retired now, and had come up through the ranks, as we say. He had been an actor, and became assistant floor manager in the early days of British television; a dynamic, energetic man, and good for a laugh. You've got to laugh. You've got to enjoy what you're doing, and I must admit he made a big impression.



Pat Armenia- Patented Photos

Joe: The producer of a program tends to put his distinctive stamp on the show he's working on.

Michael: He did on the fourth season, yes.

Joe: With the first three seasons having been produced by David Maloney, do you think there was a distinct change in the identity of the program as it began its fourth season?

Michael: Yes, it did, it changed a lot. I'm going to be honest with you. After giving Vere a big buildup, in a way I don't know whether it went in the right direction during the fourth season, but, yes, David Maloney had made a big stamp on it as well, but he didn't direct, as well. When we started, it was going to be a sort of **Dirty Dozen** in space, a much tougher series than what it ended up being after the fourth season. There was a big outcry about violence on television in the late '70s; **Starsky and Hutch**, for instance, they cleaned that up, and they decided with **Blake's 7** that we shouldn't be seen doing anything that was too "real." I can see their point with kids watching. If people are going to mimic what they see, then we do have quite a responsibility with what we do on television.

Joe: So that affected the early seasons?

Michael: I think it did, yes. I think we played safe a bit on some of the stories, but there were good things that came out of it.

Joe: When Vere Lorrimer took over as producer, what sort of direction did the show turn?

Michael: "Kidult." He said, "Kidult," that was the word. Kid/adult, for adults and kids, and he wanted more of a comic strip, which was fine for me, but I can see, in fact, that it's rather a limiting thing. The seriousness that you have with Blake, who's a very moral character, went by the bye, really, and it did become more comic strip, I think.

Joe: You said that was all right with you?

Michael: Yes, my character... you'll have to ask the others, but I don't think it worked as well with the others. It's difficult to say, but the identity of it, in a way, as a piece - it did change, and it was strange. I think if we ever do any more, we'll have to think very seriously about which direction we're going in.

Joe: Did any of the other cast members at that time object to the direction the show was taking?

Michael: Well, basically, you couldn't really make too much of an objection. I think there were [complaints] every now and then. We all felt that the last episode was rather clumsily written. I personally felt that I didn't have that much to do in the fourth season, but that's me as an actor looking after my own thing, as it were. You couldn't really make a big objection; you can't! You couldn't say, "Well, I'm not doing this,"; all right, you're fired. In the end, you don't write it; they do.

Joe: We talked about how the stamp of a producer changed the program, but when Terry Nation stopped writing all the scripts at the beginning of the second season, and other writers began to make their contributions, did that affect the show's direction?



Pat Armenia- Patented Photos

Michael: The continuity obviously changed, and I think we also had different directors that hadn't been there before. Apart from Vere, after the first season, all the directors changed, and so you had... in a way, the people who kept the continuity up were us, the script editor, the producer I suppose, and Vere Lorrimer, who was one of the resident directors. There were times I thought... We had one particular director who, I think, directed one of the more popular episodes, but I thought he went off on a tangent; George Spenton-Foster, and I thought it was a little... We did one episode in the second season, which to this day I can't fathom what it was all about, *Voice from the Past*. You had Travis bandaged up, which I always thought was the director's revenge, actually, because he [Brian Croucher] and the director weren't the greatest fans of each other. Poor old Brian had to be bandaged up, with a glass eye. It was a very odd episode.

Joe: Let's wrap this up by talking about what you're involved with now.

Michael: At the moment, I've been involved with doing voiceovers for training films. What I'm looking towards is theatre; possibly in the north of England, possibly in a Noel Coward play. I've got an idea with a friend about doing something else, an idea of our own. Perhaps touring around universities and colleges, which we're going to work on over the next year or so and kick it around. That's got to be a hobby for a bit, until we get it together.

Joe: Do you have a particular play in mind?

Michael: Not a play. It would probably be the War of Independence from our point of view. We'll come over here and we'll do it!

Joe: Did you see the movie *Revolution*?

Michael: Oh, I saw that! I could see what he was getting at, and funnily enough the skirmishes, the minor battles were quite interesting, but oh dear, what a mess! It didn't work, but I could see what he was getting at, and, in a way, you could say that it was a brave attempt.

Joe: So this play is in the planning stages right now?

Michael: Yes, you could say it's going to be *Revolution* on the stage! It's an idea. Maybe we'll do the theatre version of *Revolution*!

Zen and the Art of Computer Maintenance:

Conducted by Joe Nazzaro

Joe Nazzaro: I think that a lot of your American fans don't really know that much about your acting career, other than your credits in *Blake's 7*. When did you actually get your start in acting? Did you wander into it by accident, or did you have your eye on it all along?

Peter Tuddenham: I had my eye on it straightaway since I left school, which is a long time ago! I did Shakespeare at school; everybody does Shakespeare at school, and I was hooked on acting when I was very small. In fact, I used to do conjuring tricks when I was a small boy. When I was a young boy, I used to do conjuring tricks, and at Christmastime, I used to do small exhibitions of conjuring. I used to have a curtained-off piece of the lounge, and I used to come out and put my table down and do the conjuring tricks. That's how I got started.

Joe: So you were a performer right from the word "go."

Peter: But I was very shy; I still am, I'm a very shy person. When I get in front of people, I'm okay, but when I walk into a room, I have to collect my thoughts when I go for auditions, which I don't do much anymore. Every actor is very shy; I think, inwardly, they're shy. Outwardly, they give the impression that they're not.

Joe: Did you go in for any formal training?

Peter: No.

Joe: Then you're pretty much an exception, because many British actors usually go in for some sort of training.

Peter: To RADA or the Royal Academy... No, I went straight into the theatre as an impressionist. I did revues when I was about nineteen. I was asked to go to a concert party, which was a series of acts. We used to call it a concert party, a summer show, and I introduced the acts, and did an act of impressions of English stars and comedians who I adored. I love comedy, and that's how I got started; I was about nineteen. Then somebody introduced me to a manager who ran a repertory company, or stock company as you call them over here, and my father paid him a premium of fifty pounds, and he was going to teach me the rudiments of the theatre without going to a theatre school, so I learned the basics of theatre by going into a repertory company, and sweeping the stage, and holding the book that the actors could do their dry runs from, doing the curtains and playing parts. I learned my craft that way instead of going to a dramatic school, and I think I was far

better doing that than going to a dramatic school.

Joe: Before we go any further, Peter, I'm going to ask you to use your acting ability to project a little bit. I can hear you, but my tape recorder might be having a little trouble.

Peter: Have you got that going? Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't know. Well, I'll put the voice level up then. I didn't realize that we were starting.

Joe: That's what I call informal.

Peter: Well, exactly.

Joe: Have you gotten to see any of Chicago during your visit?

Peter: Yes, they rushed us up to Lake Geneva yesterday, which was lovely. We went to a brewery; Michael Keating wanted us to go to the brewery. It's all his fault, and we came back by Lake Geneva and had a smashing swim, and it was quite something to see. It reminded me of a place in Jersey when we went for holiday. When I say Jersey, I mean...

Joe: The island of Jersey. Don't forget, you're talking to somebody from the state of New Jersey here in America.

Peter: No, Jersey the Channel Island. Have you got all that, by the way?

Joe: We're just making some neighborly conversation. Why don't we readjust our gears and see if we can get back on track here. Anyway, you started acting at a very early age. After training in the theatre for some time, was your inclination to stay with the theatre, or were you anxious to branch into other areas?

Peter: I took it as it came. The war came, and I had to go into the army, obviously. I was drafted into the Royal Army Service Corps, and from there, they wanted to find actors in their units that could entertain, and so I was transferred from my unit into an entertainment unit. This was later on in the war, and I joined up with Terry Thomas, Charlie Chester, who you may not have heard of, a lot of people in England, and we went across to Normandy with an army entertainment unit. We went through that, and that's how I finished up the war, because I was entertaining troops.

Joe: Once you got out of the service, where did you go from there?

An Interview With Peter Tuddenham

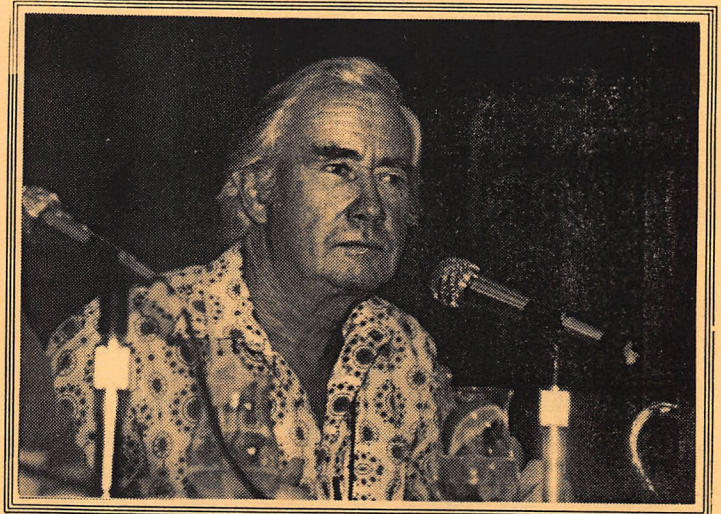
Peter: Well, when I was in the service entertaining the troops, I met Ivor Novello, a famous actor/manager, and he was in the audience when I was doing a show in Brussels, and I was compering, half in English and half in French, and he was in the audience, and I had to introduce him, because they said, "There's someone in the audience, Ivor Novello—he's just going to start a new play in London, and he wants to play his latest composition." So, he came up and I had to introduce him. Well, such was my introduction that he came up and said could I meet him afterwards, because he had a proposition. He said, "When do you leave the army?" and I said, "Well, such-and-such a date," and he said "I'm putting on a tour of my play and I'd like you to play the second lead. I've seen your performance tonight as a compere and an impressionist and I think you'd be marvelous for the part", and I had a job before I left the army, like that. From that, I was introduced to Noel Coward, and he gave me a part in his play at the Cambridge Theatre, called, *Ace of Clubs*, and I must tell you the story of how I met Noel Coward. I was introduced to his manager, and he said, "Come along to an audition", and the play was *Ace of Clubs*. I went along and I was at the stage of the Hippodrome Theatre in London, and he said, "Now, Peter, it's very nice to meet you, very nice. Now, would you look at those lyrics, read them? There's my pianist. Would you read them, and then I will hear you." There were two other boys, and they'd already gotten their parts; the play was called *Ace of Clubs*, and the number was called "The Juvenile Delinquents." There were three juvenile delinquents, and they were "cosh-boys"—punks, I suppose you'd say now, and they had big wide shoulders, and they wanted another boy, which was supposed to be me. I read the lyrics and I went through them with the pianist, and afterwards I was shaking like a leaf. He took me by the arm—Noel, or "Sir Noel," as he was later—and he walked me right across the front of the stage of the Hippodrome in London and he said, "My dear Peter, we'd love to have you with us. How little do you want." I'd have done it for nothing!

Joe: I think he knew that.

Peter: Of course he did, but I had a very good agent, and I was the highest-paid of those juvenile delinquents! There you are, Joe, that's the story.

Joe: So then, you decided to remain in theatre for a while.

Peter: Oh, yes. I went on tour and I was in that show for nine months, and then I went on tour with other plays, and then came television.



Mike Macomber

Joe: How did you get involved with television?

Peter: Well, I came from East Anglia, you see, and all those commercial stations kept creeping in from different regions, and when Anglia Television started, I put in for a job as a presenter for commercials and I got the job. I presented a commercial television program for three years on my own; the program was called *See For Yourself*. It was a quarter-hour, purely commercials, and I had a girl with me, and I had my own scriptwriter, and it was never done anywhere else before, aside from Anglia Television. It wasn't networked; it was just in that region, and I did that for three years. Then I did panel games; I appeared on the same channel doing panel games with teenagers. *Top of the Form* was the one I did. It was like a quiz; I did that also, so I had two programs a week going out. After that, I did a lot of plays for the BBC in the original Television Centre. We did the programs live—there was no recording—we did it once a Sunday, and we repeated the whole thing on a Thursday, so we did two extra sessions. Those Anglia magazines, though, they were fantastic. We had to learn the whole thing; we had to learn the prices and everything. This was before videotape came in, and we had little cue cards, and we had little things on our wrists and under the chair, so that when we looked at the chair, we could say, "Now this chair—how much?" Then, when videotape came in, there was this great long roll of paper; it was not on the lens, but you sort of read the thing, and it was wonderful—we didn't have to learn it! The first time we did it, I thought, "This thing is fantastic!" The thing unwound, and I was saying, "And so... we have the thing... and you know..." and there was the lens up there! Another time, Joe, we did a

Christmas show and we advertised Pomagne— have you ever heard of it? It's like a champagne, sort of a cider, and I had this bottle between my legs, and I said, "Now, this looks like champagne, it tastes like champagne, and it pops like champagne," and on the word "pop" I used to tip the cork out. Come the take, I said, "It looks like champagne, it tastes like champagne, and it pops like..." and the cork broke! I said, "Oh, fuck!" I didn't actually say it, but you could see it, and they said, "Cut!" We greased the cork, then we did the video again: "It looks like champagne, it tastes like champagne, and it pops like champagne," and I [*simulated pouring*]. We finished, and I went back to Sussex where I lived— this was in Norfolk— and I said, "Thank God for that!" It goes out days after I go back in Anglia, and I don't see it, because I'm in another part of the country. I go back the next week to do my next take, and I go into reception and everybody falls about laughing. I said, "What's the matter?" "Did you see last week?" I said, "Of course I didn't see last week," and they said, "They put out the wrong tape!" They put out the one where I said... and it sold more bottles that way! That's a true story, Joe, and I had a letter of apology from the program controller, which I didn't need really, but one of the engineers was sacked because they messed the whole thing up. This was in the early days of video.

Joe: Let's skip ahead to the subject you'll be talking about for much of this weekend: how did you get involved in doing Blake's 7?



Mike Macomber

Peter: Well, I had worked with Vere Lorrimer, who directed one of the first episodes, doing children's programs with him, and I knew him personally as well, and he rang me up at the BBC while I was working there and he said, "We're doing a science fiction program and I'm directing it, and we want a computer voice. Would you like to come along and do something for it?" I said, "Yes, I'd

love to. What sort of voice is it?" He said, "We don't know, but could you come along and do a few voices?" There was Vere Lorrimer, David Maloney, who was the producer of the program, and I went along, and a lot of other actors went along as well; I wasn't the only one. I said, "What do you want?" and they said, "We don't know. Do some voices. Don't make it a Dalek, don't make it mechanical. Try to make it a human voice as a computer." I go away, and two weeks go by, and I forgot about it, actually. The phone rang and it was Vere, and he said, "Peter, we'd like you; would you like to do it?" That's how I got it; that was it.

Joe: So you had nothing to go on back then?

Peter: No, I had a few sentences.

Joe: Now, an actor normally has to try to shape a particular character the way he wants it; I would think that would be a bit difficult at first with a voiceover character.

Peter: It was, Joe, it was, but the words were there. I got the voice, and it sort of came along. I can't describe it, but I wasn't worried at all. It just sort of came naturally. I just did my "Zen" voice and that was it.

Joe: A few of the cast members have said that you were the person with all the behind-the-scenes stories, having been in the control booth overlooking the studio.

Peter: Well, I did and I didn't, really. I was in my own little box, you see. They called it "Zen's Den:" black curtains, and I was in a little space like this [*indicating dimensions of room*], and there's my table and monitor, three microphones of different sorts: a great big one, a lip mike for Orac, a big one for Zen, and there I was. I had my monitor and I was part of the show. You see, Joe, I was asked when I started if I'd like to do it, recording in the studio, and I said, "I'd rather be on the set, doing it live with the actors, although they don't see me and I don't see them; I just see them on the monitor." Otherwise, you're in a recording studio, which I've done **Doctor Who** in. In **Doctor Who**, you do it out of synch, and do your little thing. I'd rather like to do it with the cast, and this is what happened.

Joe: Whose idea was it to have you do a second voice at the same time as you were doing the voice of Zen?

Peter: It was Vere Lorrimer's. The actor who had done Orac originally in one episode, which was the last episode in the first series, Derek Farr, didn't want to do any more. I don't know why, but Vere said, "Would you like to take it over?" I said, "Well, I've got to hear his voice first; I can't remember how he did it," and I listened to

recordings of David's voice doing Orac and I modeled my Orac on him. Then I made it my own; I made it sort of prissy, a little man in a bowler hat with an umbrella. You see, when I do my characters, I see them as individuals, even though they're computers. Slave, I made him sort of a cringing, Uriah Heep/David Copperfield type: *[in Slave's voice]* "Oh dear, I don't know!" I was thinking of that when I was doing Slave.

Joe: What sort of character did you envision Zen as?

Peter: Well, as sort of superior, rather pompous, knowing it all.

Joe: So by putting yourself in these characters' places, it made it that much easier to do their voices?

Peter: Yes, it did.

Joe: Your characterization of Orac had a good deal more personality to it then, say, Zen, which was relatively emotionless.

Peter: That's right. I made him more of a human character, and once I started doing that voice, they wrote it— whoever the writers were, Terry or Chris Boucher— they saw what I was doing and they wrote it in that vein. I didn't alter it, like say, "I can't say that!" It just seemed to work. I don't know how. They were just very lucky, you see.

Joe: Did you every have any difficulty going from one voice to another in a particular episode?

Peter: No, because, as I say, I do a lot of radio, and I originally did impressions, as I told you. I could change from one voice to another, like dear old Peter Sellers, who could do it in a second. I'm not a Peter Sellers, of course, but I could do that. When Orac and Slave were talking... I can't remember what it was, but they said, "Do you want to record one voice and do the other one live?" and I said, "No, I'll do them both if it works, and if it doesn't work, then I'll do it," and it worked. That's the challenge, you see, and an actor likes a challenge. The only time I did record one or two things was when they went on location, and Orac was in the jungle or wherever it was, and I wasn't allowed to go on location with them, you see; they couldn't afford it, so I had to record that bit, but that was the only time.

Joe: Did you feel just like another member of the cast, even though you spent a good deal of your time in a little box away from the set?



Mike Macomber

Peter: Oh, yes, although I didn't appear at every rehearsal. Paul and Michael— Paul particularly— had it all up there, because he was with it all the time. I only appeared at the read-throughs and at the producer's run and the technical run, so I appeared three times during the rehearsal period, and then in the studio; therefore, I wasn't aware too much of what happened when I wasn't on. I was part of the cast, and it was lovely. I did other things as well, and it was a marvelous job: an actor playing in four serials for four years, never having to learn any lines, because I read it all, obviously. Once you get the character, you see, it's lovely, and we were all such a team. They didn't think of me as an outsider; I was part of the team.

Joe: Going into the fourth series of *Blake's 7*, the direction of the series seemed to take a different direction, in terms of the writing and the fact that Terry Nation was no longer there. In addition, you were now doing your third voice for the show: the voice of Slave. Did that present an additional challenge for you, doing yet another voice?

Peter: It was a challenge, it was. There again, I had to do a little - not an audition, but Chris Boucher said, "Peter, we've got a new character called Slave; will you play him?" Now Slave is a slave; you do this, you do that, and I said, "Is this how you want him?" and he said, "Yes!" So, I gave him a voice; it was the first episode of the fourth series, and I said, "Yes, well, I'll do it, it would be lovely," and I did it. I didn't want to do anything too grotesque, but I thought it would be an wonderful contrast to that little prissy Orac, and so that's how it happened.

Joe: When *Blake's 7* finally came to an end, it didn't seem like you had any trouble finding work. Were you inclined to stay with voiceovers, or did you want to get

back into something where you actually had a presence?

Peter: I'll tell you something, Joe: I will do anything that brings me a salary. You're only as good as the next job, and whatever came around... I think I did a lot of radio; I still do. I'm working on a book at the moment— did I tell you this? No, I was telling one of the girls; I get a bit confused. I'm working on adapting a book now for radio, to read in episodes. Do you have book-reading on radio here in America?

Joe: Not very often; not nearly as much as you have in the UK.

Peter: They have *A Book at Bedtime* in England, and it's a serialization of a book done by an actor who takes all the parts. I do that, and I've adapted one myself; it's a very funny book.

Joe: Since we're running out of time, let's wrap this up with one more question. This being only your second American convention, what do you think about the enormous popularity of *Blake's 7* here in America?

Peter: It's overwhelming, it jolly well is, as I was saying to some of the fans I was signing autographs for. It's very flattering, and I think it's wonderful that they should take to their hearts us, as actors. They're not our bread and butter, but they're responsible for our success, the fans over here, for our success in America.



Mike Macomber

I'm very grateful, and I'll do anything I can to help them and— what can I say— to please them. What more can I say? We're only actors doing our job, and if they find pleasure in what we do, well, that's wonderful; that's our job done.

Joe: With a little gratification thrown in on the side.

Peter: And a few residuals as well. I mean that, though. They're all so super over here, not just the fans, but everybody. Fort Lauderdale was wonderful at Omnicon, and now this. I can't wait to come back, and I mean that.

An Interview with Richard Franklin Conducted by Joe Nazzaro

Joe Nazzaro: Working our way forward from *Doctor Who*, which you were known for, you wound up doing a small scene in *Blake's 7* as they went into their fourth season. How did you get the part in *Aftermath*?

Richard Franklin: It's quite funny, actually. I'm a guest director at the Webber Douglas Academy of Music and the Dramatic Arts, and I went to see— well, it was my production of students there, and sitting next to me was Vere Lorrimer, the director of *Aftermath*, and I had worked with him some time before. We got to talking, and Vere asked was I willing to die for him, and I said, "I'd do anything for you, Vere." He said, "Well, if you'd like a couple of days filming", because I was going on holiday in western Ireland, and on my way back I was taking on the job of associate director of a theatre in Chesterfield in the north of England, and I had to pass through where Vere was filming *Aftermath*, so I said, "Yes, I'd love to do it." Now this is the crux of the whole thing: I got lots of fan letters from people who have often commented on that one short scene, which was a good scene. Why was it a good scene? Well, it was well directed, it was consummately played, of course [smiles] but what was the important thing was that it was a very well written script, and this is why I think the Jon Pertwee stories [in *Doctor Who*] on the whole, held up better than any of the other Doctors, because they were the best written. Although there have been very good *Doctor Who* scripts in recent years, right up to the present day, I think a lot of the scripts have not been so good. If you haven't got the words, you haven't got the idea, and it's waste of time trying to dolly it up, and put fancy costumes on it, and call it a show.

Joe: You mentioned working for Vere Lorrimer. Isn't he more of an actor's director?

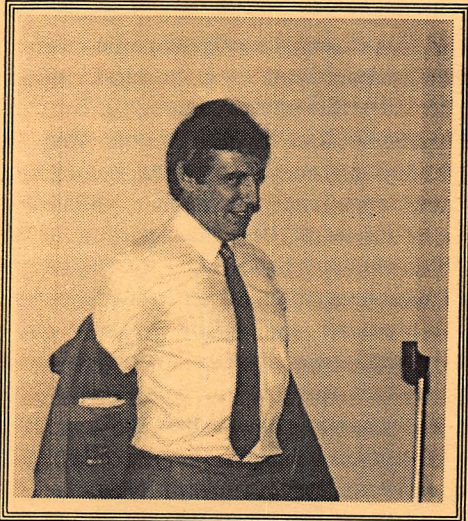


J. Nazzaro

Richard: Well, yes; it's a game, you see: the only way you can learn about the business of entertainment is through a live audience. That is the only way you can learn. You cannot learn by being an AFM [assistant floor manager] in a studio, becoming a studio manager, going on a director's course, and calling yourself a television director. You know how to move the cameras, but you do not know how to move, psychologically, the actors, and you do not know how to move the story. When I worked with television directors who are of this kind, who have worked only in television, there are some directors who are very good, but I think it's the exception, rather than the rule. I think the importance of theatre can't be overestimated, and I believe that television companies have totally ignored their responsibility; which is to plow back some of the enormous profits they make into live theatre. I think they should put 1 or 2 percent of their net profits back into live theatre. They should run live theatres up and down the country; it would be very nice for local areas, but it would also be a training ground for actors, many of whom don't know how to speak, because they're only used to television. It would be a very cheap way to get a much higher class of director, and a much higher quality of show.

Captured in a Quiet Moment:

Conducted by Joe Nazzaro



M. Modig

Joe Nazzaro: Paul, the last time that we talked, we concentrated on *Blake's 7*, and your work before that series. What we'd like to discuss now, if you don't mind, is your life away from acting, and what you're involved with now.

Paul Darrow: Sure. I play golf when I can. I wish I was as good as Jack Nicklaus; I never will be, but I try. I enjoy golf—it gets me out in the fresh air. I read a lot; I write. You may have heard that I have this upcoming book; it's a prequel to *Blake's 7*. I also like the movies.

Joe: We started to talk about that in our last interview. What movies do you particularly enjoy?

Paul: I like John Wayne very much. I like movies generally. My wife would say that there isn't a movie that I would not sit through, but that's not quite true. I'm just a fan of good, well-made films, and there are a lot of them about. Obviously, there are some areas that I prefer over others: a good drama, I like good action movies; I'd say my tastes are very similar to most

people's. I haven't as yet seen *Platoon*, which I believe is [supposed to be] a wonderful picture, but I look forward to seeing that.

Joe: Have you ever been interested in pursuing more work in film, as opposed to television or stage work, which you've done quite a bit?

Paul: Oh, absolutely, yes. It's the opportunity, though, you see. They're rare, in the kind of way that you'd want them to be. There are parts that one can be offered in the movies, but I would want to do what I wanted to do, otherwise there's no point in doing it, unless they offer you a vast amount of money, in which case you do it, and then forget it; we all have to do that sometimes. I've never been actually offered anything in the movie line that I considered worth doing.

Joe: So in the meantime, you're content to stay with stage and television?

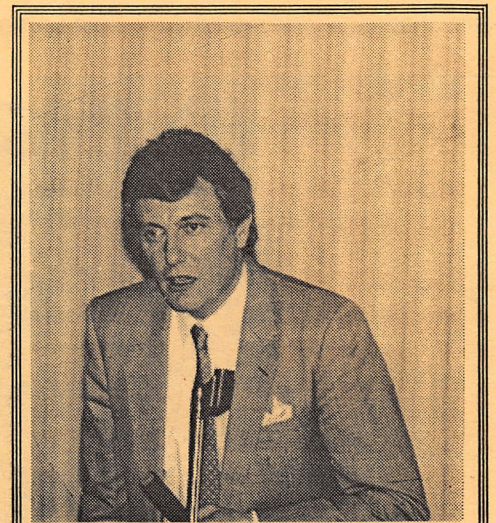
Paul: No, I would like to do more in the movie line than I have done; I've done very little. I've done some TV movies. There is a lot more opportunity there, and I have one or two other things in mind that I'd like to do, but there is an enormous difficulty in setting things up in England than there is over here. There is always someone over here, if they think it's a viable proposition.

Joe: You just finished a play recently over in the UK. Could you tell us a little more about it?

Paul: Yes, it was called *A Sting in the Tail*, and it was written by Brian Clements and Dennis Spooner—

a good play; a "souffle", I suppose you'd call it, a comedy thriller, much in the same vein as *Sleuth* or *Deathtrap*. It went very very well. It got mixed reviews in some places, but I think it needs rewriting. It's too long by about 20 minutes, the women are not developed as characters, so Brian is going to do a little rewrite, and then they're thinking of taking it into the West End. Whether I would be going with it would depend on what I'm doing at the time, or not doing, as the case may be. I may need the money; I may have to do it. I was the lead, so I enjoyed doing it, and I'm sure they'd ask me to do it again, but I wouldn't want to be committed for too long.

Joe: It's finished its initial run, then?



M. Modig

Paul: I suppose you'd call it a trial, and it tried out reasonably well, but as I say, it does need some rewriting.

Joe: During our last interview, you had mentioned a play that you were interested in doing, that needed a bit of fine tuning before it would be a

An Interview with Paul Darrow

viable project— is this the same play?

Paul: That was a play that I picked up over here; a Canadian play, actually, that nothing has come of as yet. *A Sting in the Tail* was not dissimilar in many ways. I was going to do this Canadian play with Vere Lorrimer directing, Vere who produced the last season of *Blake's 7*, and directed a lot of them. Vere didn't like certain aspects of the play, and we were going to Toronto to see the author of the play, but I was very busy, doing a pantomime at Christmas, and then right into *A Sting in the Tail*, and I haven't had the chance to talk to Vere and get down to the nitty gritty gritty with him, so we may bypass the play, because we do feel that it needs rewrites, and if we can get to Toronto, and have a talk with the author... we have the rights, though.

Joe: What are you in the middle of right now?

Paul: I'm doing a play that I've done before in the West End. It's called *Run for Your Wife*, and I'm doing that for three months. They change the cast every three months, and it's in the West End, which is very prestigious.

Joe: What part do you play in it?

Paul: I play a cop. It's a very amusing role. It's difficult to describe; it's farce. I've done it before, as I said, and that allows me to be home, rather than touring on location.

Joe: Is that preferable at this point?

Paul: Well, my wife is rather anxious about that, and also, I have to write the book. That pays a salary every week to enable me to sit in my own garden during the day and write.

Joe: We started to talk about the book earlier. What else can you tell us about it?

Paul: It's a prequel to *Blake's 7*. Somebody once asked me, "Where do you think Avon came from, what was his background before he ever met Blake on *Blake's 7*?" So I thought about that, and decided it might be a good idea to write a novel about that, and, indeed, that's what I started to do. At the moment, I'm at the stage where he's about to be born.

Joe: Is this your first foray into writing?

Paul: No, I've written quite a lot in the past. All of it has been rejected at one time or another. Once or twice they've been accepted. One was accepted, and then they decided it was too expensive, which it was, but then I knew that when I write it. This is the trick: if you write something that is likely to be expensive to produce on TV, then obviously British money is what is available.



M. Modig

Joe: The book that you're writing now; did you approach the publisher with the idea, or did they come to you and ask you to write it?

Paul: Oh, no, I went to them, and they were very enthusiastic. I didn't expect them to be, but they were.

Joe: I suppose that looking at the market they've had for *Doctor Who* books, they thought the time was right for another one about *Blake's 7*.

Paul: I would imagine that was the case, yes, particularly written by somebody like me, assuming I was able to do it, and apparently they think I can. Even if they didn't, I have a friend who's a publisher, who wanted to publish it in a small way; maybe 5,000 copies he would publish, and that would be it. We could always have done that, but I now have a big publishing house.

Joe: Is this going to be the size of, say, one of the *Doctor Who* adaptations that are in release?

Paul: It might be, I don't know. It's up to them, and I haven't discussed that with them yet. They're certainly going to produce it in the hardback to start with, but whether they want to produce it in that way, that's really up to them. It's an interesting point that you raise; I'll have to discuss that with my editor, but we really haven't gotten that far in the discussion about the format. They want to know what it's going to be about, how it's going to develop, and then we have the contractual obligation to Terry [Nation], because they're his characters. Terry is of course a friend, and he's been very helpful, so there's no problem there.

Joe: You sound like you've been extremely busy these days.

Paul: What I'm mostly trying to do is... either actors work, or they don't work. When I work, I usually command a reasonably high fee, so I'm able when I'm working to stash some of it away, so that I can then be a little picky about what I do next; that's what I'm trying to do now. When I finish this in September, unless something really interesting comes along, I wouldn't really want to do it until the new year, so I'd like to take maybe four months off and write, or do one or two other things; maybe come over here.

Joe: Different writing projects?

Paul: Yes.

Joe: Do you have anything in mind?



M. Modig

Paul: A detective series, in the United States.

Joe: So that, of course, will give you a chance to come over and do some "research"?

Paul: Well, exactly— I'm not stupid! I love it over here, and any excuse... that's why I do conventions. It's nice to meet everybody, of course, but it's nice to come to this great country. It's second only to my own in my affections.

Joe: Before we finish, there is one **Blake's 7** question that I'd like to ask: now that you're writing a book about the character of Avon, you're really getting a chance to explore the character more than you did in the series. Looking back at the program now, is there an aspect of the character that you really would like to have gotten the chance to develop?

Paul: I don't know yet, because I haven't got to the character in the book yet, and I'm not quite sure what's going to happen, or what the situation is. Terry has offered to help me on this. As you know, my admiration for Terry is unbounded, so I would say no, there was not. Obviously, if we had done more of the series, there would have been more that Terry would have brought out. It would be marvelous if we in tandem brought out, or I might do something that would give him an idea, so obviously there are aspects to the Avon character that we could explore.

Joe: Are there any that you have in mind now?

Paul: His relationship with women is quite interesting; he usually kills them! *[Laughter]* That's interesting. It would be interesting to see a relationship develop.

Joe: You won't really be painting him as a ladies' man, though.

Paul: No, I never really thought of him as one. He wasn't terribly interested in women. That's why it amazes me when they say that he's sexy. I never set out to make him that way. I mean, he was a man, but his interests made him aloof, if you like; he didn't trust them.

Joe: Do you think that is something that the fans have injected into the series after the fact; some of the imagined relationships between the characters?

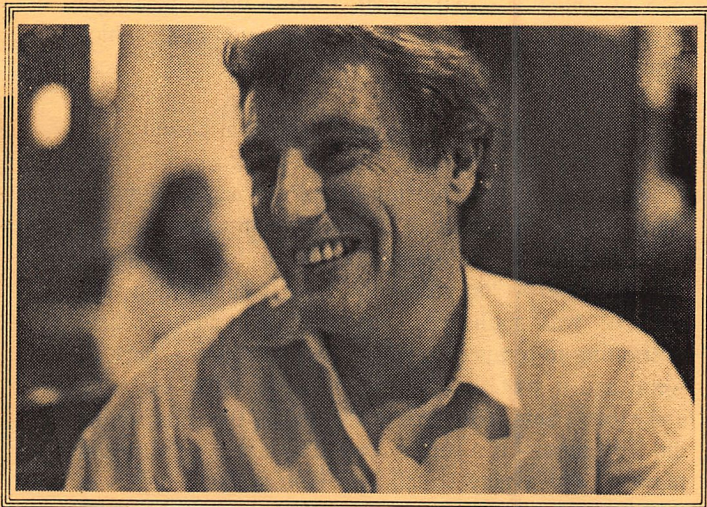
Paul: I suspect that's an element there. There almost certainly would be, particularly when you have a character as enigmatic as Avon. I think it's very important as an actor to let the audience make up their mind, otherwise you insult their intelligence, and I think that happens a lot. I try to avoid that by giving them the opportunity to place their own interpretations on events.

Joe: Are you pretty happy with what you've seen in that vein up to now?

Paul: Yes, otherwise I wouldn't be doing this.

Joe: Michael Keating is fond of saying that after **Blake's 7**, Vila would probably be off running a bar somewhere. What do you think Avon would be doing?

Paul: He'd be fairly solitary, rather like a recluse, and you worry about somebody [like that]. You have a very dangerous man, and for no apparent reason he goes out of circulation; you would always worry in case he came back.



M. Modig

Joe: Do you think that being around a group of people for an extended period of time would have soured him on society in general?

Paul: He didn't think much of the human race; he was right. I don't know— that's really up to Terry, and I know he has ideas. I've always been fascinated by the idea of the man who wants to quit, and people won't let him, so he has to come back. It's like the gunfighter who wants to hang up his guns, and there's always somebody who rides into town.

Joe: Do you think he wanted to quit, or that he just wanted to be left alone in his own quiet corner of the universe?

Paul: I think he had a death wish, and it was just a matter of indifference; that's why he survived, it was just instinctive.

Joe: But wasn't that one of the contradictions of the character, that he chose to stay with the group?

Paul: Well, not exactly, but you have to remember that the name of the show was called **Blake's 7**, and initially, that's what it was. Terry always said that if you have seven people or six people, two or three are going to come to the fore, and two or three did, and then there was the tangent that Avon was on. That happens in a dramatic series sometimes, and it's part of the interest in **Blake's 7**, certainly for me as an actor. I was allowed to do that, and it was largely due to Terry's influence.

Joe: The last time we did an interview together, **Blake's 7** was only just getting started in the New York area. What do you think about what's been happening since then?

Paul: Obviously, it seems to be picking up. Terry always said it would. I think that this year and next year, the show will continue to provoke interest, at least I hope it will, then I can come back more.

Joe: Do you think this interest will influence the BBC in their decision making regarding the series?

Paul: I wish it would. If anything would, American pressure will, but that remains to be seen. The pressure is there, and if the pressure is there, it may or may not produce a reaction. The chances are that it may, but we'll have to wait and see.



M. Modig

Sometimes the Villains Get the Best Lines: Conducted by Joe Nazzaro

Joe Nazzaro: Instead of focusing in on Blake's 7 right away, why don't we talk first about your early acting career? Did you go the same route as many British actors, and go to drama school before starting out?

Brian Croucher: Oh, yeah. They didn't do much for my voice. [laughter] They didn't get me to speak the Queen's English, as it were, but you don't worry about that in the States, do you? If you come from Tennessee, you can play Hamlet; if you come from New York, you can play Hamlet.

Joe: It does seem that many actors over here choose to go in for some sort of formal training.

Brian: I went to a place called LAMDA, which is short for the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts. Among the other people that went there throughout the years were people like Richard Harris, Martin Shaw, and... we should actually name some women that went there, shouldn't we? I've told people in the past that when I was there, I used to live with Martin Shaw, and all the women used to look at me, and say, "Martin Shaw?" I used to say, "Yeah, we used to live together."

Joe: After that, did you go right into rep?

Brian: Yes, I did all that. I didn't do too many seasons, because as you found in my fifteen years of television work, they usually gave me the bad guys to play, and in rep plays, it was not the bad guy, but usually the captain, or the vicar, or something like that, that they couldn't exactly see me playing.

Joe: So right away they had you pegged as the villain?

Brian: I think so, yes. They had some idea that because you had a London accent, you were a criminal. There were a few producers I'd like to murder [laughter], but it's like anything else: once you make a name for yourself, and prove that you can do it, and you're good, they keep coming to you for more. It's like if you were a good craftsman, they never make you into the manager, because who's going to make their chairs for them?

Joe: Did you move into television fairly quickly, or did you stick with theatre for awhile?

Brian: Well, fairly quickly; after finishing '67-'69, about three or four years. Once I established myself in the theatre a bit... I did a lot of work at a theatre called The Royal Court Theatre. You've got the National Theatre, which does all the classics, you've got the Royal Shakespeare, which does all the Shakespeare, and the Royal Court is contemporary, and I suppose that was my repertory experience, if any. Over a period of twelve years, I did twelve or so productions there, so I was in sometimes two a year; usually one a year over twelve years. That was my theatre grounding, which I'm very grateful for.

Joe: What sort of roles did you play during that period?

Brian: What did I play? The first play I did was by Edward Bond, in which, although it was contemporary, we did stone a baby, so I suppose I was a bad guy again. There was a person called the Lord Chamberlain, and once he was abolished—because he used to censor everything in terms of violence and language—once he went, and it was all lifted, there was a lot of swearing and violent acts. This was at the end of the '60s. What did I do then—it's such a long time ago... I did prison plays. I did a play called *The Removalist*, which was an Australian play. I played a police constable in a play called *Christie in Love*. There's a little theatre called The Theatre Upstairs—it's like a studio theatre—in which I played a police constable, digging up the bodies... we had a famous murderer in this country called Reginald John Christie, who murdered all these women up there towards Notting Hill Gate, and it was a sort of surreal idea, because it was reported in the papers quite a lot. To actually dig for these "bodies", there was this chicken pen; it all happened in this square of chicken wire, and I was digging up these rolled up newspapers, so it was like the earth, but a surreal idea. I was reciting these filthy limericks, one of which you won't be able to put into your magazine... [repeats limerick]

Joe: You're right, Brian, I don't think we can print that! [laughter] Now you were playing a constable in this play?

Brian: Right, I was playing a constable.

Joe: And while he's digging, he's reciting these dirty limericks?

An Interview with Brian Croucher

Brian: He's reciting these dirty limericks because he was a— what do you call those people who have sex with people when they're dead?— a necrophiliac. There's one very subtle, clever moment in the play where I find this body, and I say to the police inspector, "I found one, sir; there's a body", and it's a dummy, and what I become then in the play— he used to pick up prostitutes in West London— and then I use this falsetto voice like this [*in high-pitched voice*]: "Hello, darling! What a good time", and all that, and then you go through this whole situation of him picking up this prostitute, and taking her back to his place and then killing her, but there's one very subtle scene there. He used to come up with a tray with the tea on it, and some milk and sugar and stuff, but only one cup, and she'd say, "Oh, I like a nice cup of tea afterwards", and the subtlety is that there's only one cup because he's a necrophiliac, you know... It's very funny.

Joe: Now is this your character, or is it the murderer?

Brian: I am the constable; I'm not Christie. Christie is under the paper, and he's got this hideous head on, and in Scene Two, out in the darkness with the light on him, this head appears. He's secreted in there from the beginning of the play, and he comes out, then there are later scenes.

Joe: So all the exposition comes through the eyes of the other characters?

Brian: Yeah, and then he gets hung in the end, and we leave it to the audience; I have to back off from the audience, and Christie is hung there, and I say, "Is it right to hang people?" It was quite an anti-death penalty play, because he was messed up in the head and not too well, and not responsible, in a way. There was that aspect to it, and it had a surreal quality which I liked very much in theatre, because it embodies another area.

Joe: So you actually did stay in theatre for some time.

Brian: Off and on. I tried to stay in contact with the theatre at least once every year, either directing or being in something, even if it's only what you'd call off-Broadway, because I think it's terribly important. A lot of these young kids coming into the profession now, they don't get a chance to do a lot of theatre, because the casts are smaller, the productions are smaller, and the seasons are shorter. There's not so much money around, and there's not so many parts available, and it's

very important, I think, yet you can do television and never do theatre. It's a completely different technique. In a way, as long as you have the basic talent, the imagination, and the actual talent for just being in front of the camera, then you can get away with it. I think that these people miss a lot, because sometimes they're not necessarily self-restricted; it's because you don't have control over your destiny as an actor very much. The most control that you have is when you are rehearsing, and once that camera is rolling, or once that curtain's gone up, then you have control, and nobody can do anything about it. You can say "cut" if you want and stop it and you are in total control, but in terms of your career and your destiny, you don't really have any control. Somehow, you're used to a great degree.

Joe: You don't make acting sound like a very cheerful prospect.

Brian: It isn't for a lot of actors, because actors have got this reputation of moaning when they're not working, and then moaning when they're working, because conditions are... It's like anybody's day; some days, you get up and you feel great and everything's right, and the coffee comes at the right time, the door opens, the taxi arrives, you meet somebody and have a lovely lunch and a nice interview, and you have a great day. It works like that, and it's like a production; sometimes the casting is right, and it all just happens. A lot of times, though, the ingredients are just not there. I guess if you're an actor you just do it, because you can't do anything else, and after a while it's too late to go back to becoming queen of England [*laughter*].

Joe: What sort of roles did you get into on television? Did you wind up getting cast right away in the villainous roles?

Brian: Well, not villainous. Bad parts, yes; people who confronted life in a bad way. I mean, I could have been a captain of industry! [*laughter*]

Joe: I don't know that there's that many good parts on television for captains of industry.

Brian: Well, there are; you've got *Dallas* and *Dynasty*— they're captains of your industry. I can't believe it, but they try to convince us. I guess when you're six foot, and... I don't know what it is. It's great therapy for me, because you get rid of all the bad aspects of

yourself, and you relax a bit then; you get rid of all the shit and the angst.

Joe: Do you agree with some actors who say the villains get the best lines?



J. Nazzaro

Brian: I think we're all good and we're all bad, and some people, for all intents and purposes, are a bit badder than others. This character that I'm playing at the moment is a complete turnaround for me, because if ever I've played a policeman, they've been a little "bent," if you know what I mean. When I mean "bent," I don't mean in the sort of way... although, you never know, you could play it as...

Joe: Using that as a subtext.

Brian: Yeah, you could play the policeman as someone who hasn't quite come out yet. Nobody would ever know, you see. The character that I'm playing in this present series is a chief superintendent, which in your terms is like a precinct captain, I suppose. He does everything by the book and believes in good, honest policing. He's a university graduate, and for all intents and purposes, he's Mr. Clean. He believes in discipline and law and order, and yet he must leave the top off the toothpaste. He might beat his wife; you don't know, do you?

Joe: What's the name of this series?

Brian: It's called **Rockcliffe's Babies**. The babies are the young... sort of like what you have in **Hill Street Blues**. They're like the young detectives. They're not the CID; they're what they call the Crime Squad. They're plain-clothes policemen on the beat, and once a crime is committed, then it's handed to the CID. It's like the guys in **Hill Street Blues**, I suppose. They're

like young police that are novices, recruits just learning the trade, so they're babies, and this guy Rockcliffe is a rather tough sergeant who's in charge of the Crime Squad.

Joe: Now this program has only been on for one season so far?

Brian: They've had one series that went out last year, and this is series two, in which they're going to do ten [episodes], and I'm going to be in seven or eight. There's about ten regulars, so to get all the storylines straight, we all have about two episodes out, except Rockcliffe, who's in all ten.

Joe: Would you compare him to, say, a Frank Furillo character?

Brian: Who, me or Rockcliffe?

Joe: Rockcliffe.

Brian: Rockcliffe, yeah, and I would be like— who's the guy who's just above him?

Joe: Chief Daniels?

Brian: Chief Daniels, right. I'm like Chief Daniels; I don't want any shit in my precinct, I don't want any bad publicity, nothing.

Joe: Are you in the middle of filming the second season right now?

Brian: Yes, we're in the process of filming three, and whilst we're filming three, then we're rehearsing four when we can get away. Like tomorrow morning, I'll go for a readthrough on four, and we've still got next week. I'm filming on Sunday and Monday, and then I've got Tuesday and Wednesday off, so I'll be rehearsing four, so that we know what we want to do with the scenes. It's very helpful, because we can hash out the problems before, and we can get a much broader idea, a much broader aspect of the scene in much more depth, then actually going in and just love at first sight, bang! There's a lot more to it.

Joe: Are there a lot of comparisons being made to **Hill Street Blues**?

Brian: There's this other series, that the commercial company Thames Television does, called **The Bill**, as in the Old Bill. We call the police the Old Bill, so they're called **The Bill**. That was inaugurated and established on the process that **Hill Street Blues** goes

through: hand-held cameras, lots of fast action, lots going on. They established that, and then **Rockcliffe's Babies** came a little after that, so they're slightly in competition and slightly made the same way.

Joe: So there are more comparisons made between those two series than anything else?

Brian: Possibly, yes. It's a high-class police soap, really. It's got a lot more to it, and there's a lot more time devoted to it. The scripts are better than the soaps, but it is a soap; it's a day in the life of a police station or crime squad. I think it's got a lot going for it, and like anything else, once you get involved in it, then you can see the political aspects of policing a country. The budget—you can only get so much budget on a police force, and they can't do that much overtime, and it you have a higher rate of crime, then you have to put in a higher amount of overtime. If you haven't got the money, then the crime goes up. It's those aspects that you start to get clued in about, and you have to make them known to yourself so that you can carry out the work that the character has to do. My character has a lot to do with all that. He's an ambitious, upwardly mobile man who wants to become chief of the Metropolitan Police in the end.

Joe: What is the name of your character in this series?

Brian: His name is Chief Superintendent Barry Wyatt.

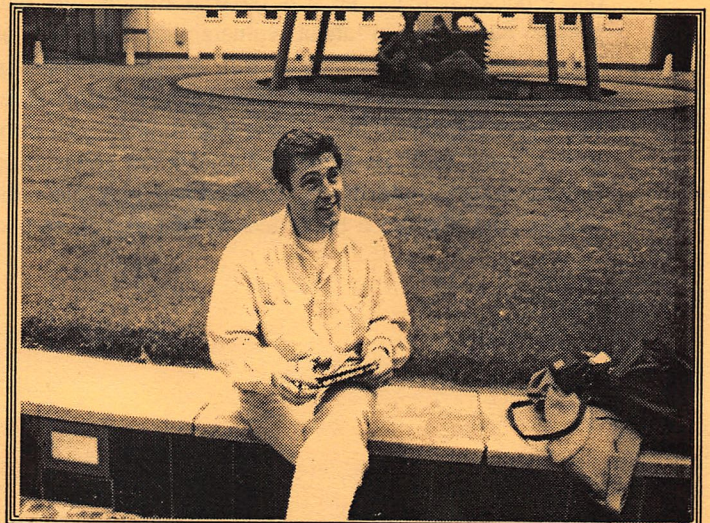
Joe: This is something we might get over in America, once they put some sort of package together?

Brian: Yeah, they get on your public service stations quite a lot, don't they? I've got a friend in New York who's often ringing me up, saying, "You son of a gun; I've just seen you doing that now!"

Joe: Let's go back a little bit and talk about how you got involved with **Blake's 7**. How did you get cast in the role of Travis, after they found out that Stephen Greif wouldn't be coming back?

Brian: I was doing another series, which has already been shown over in the States, which I'm extremely proud of. It's one of the best, if not the best thing I've ever done in television. It was done ten or twelve years ago, and it was called **Out**, as in coming out of prison. The major character comes out of prison, and I played his best friend. That was six episodes, and I still remember it now; it's one of those things that people still remember, because it's as I was saying earlier, where everything worked out. The casting was excellent, the director was spot on, the writing was

good, and the editing was very good, and, in fact, the guy who did the film editing was the only one to win an award. That year, it was very hard to win an award, because there were so many good films, but I had just finished that, and I had been seen in it, and David Maloney asked to see me and offered the part to me. It was another sort of diversion, because I had never, and I haven't since... well, I have been in **Doctor Who** as sci-fi, but to actually... you starting thinking, "How am I going to play a sci-fi character?" and you try to base something in the future and you can't, because the future is the then present, and you forget about the futuristic aspects of it. Everything that we know about space right now is earthbound; we don't know anything further, so you dismiss all that, and it's really another earthbound series.



J. Nazzaro

Joe: Did you find it difficult to take over a part that had been left by somebody else, or did you just say to yourself that you were going to go in and do it your own way?

Brian: No, I've said before that if I'd have worried, or thought about what Stephen would have done... You have to trust the guidelines of the producer, and his directors and the scriptwriter. I mean, there have been about eight Tarzans, and there's only a certain amount of things you can do in a loincloth! [laughter] There are certain guidelines, and they cast me because I was as tall as Stephen, and I'm dark like him, and quite muscular. [laughter]

Joe: And quite modest, we should add.

Brian: Not as yet, but all those things, and within those guidelines, you bring to it a quality of yourself. The man was a very hard, bitter, hateful man, and you can't do a lot different, so it's just your own quality of a

hard-bitten, hateful man that is seen. Acting is becoming another person, and— there goes David now... [noting David Jackson entering the BBC Television Centre]

Joe: During that second season, it seemed that a lot of Chris Boucher's stories gave Travis a great deal to do, such as *Trial*, which concerned the court-martial of the character. Did that make it easier to play, having some good stories, and, consequently, some good scenes to play?

Brian: Oh, sure. When somebody tries to write a little bit in depth for you, then it's up to you to confirm that, and make it work. As I've said before, I've enjoyed very much the episode *Trial*. It had a lot to do with one's personal fears; he was on trial for his life, and people have spoken about vulnerability in terms of Travis, and that there was a little bit of vulnerability when I played him. We all fear death, for Chrissake. It's a precious thing, life, as you know; all of a sudden, you're going to be no more, and you're not going to be able to enjoy certain things, so, therefore, you get a bit worried and you get a bit in fear of that aspect, and so

you have to confront that as a character. You can't get away from that, so he couldn't just put on the funny costume and be nasty to people.

Joe: There had to be some subtext to the character.

Brian: A lot more to it, yes, which one is grateful for as an actor, because I don't know about you, but I can't stand those soap operas that they just stick on; I've got no belief in these people, and they're wasting any time that I might want to use to watch something decent, because you've got all these soap operas on, which I think is an insult to living— it's so facile. There's a lot more that we could actually help ourselves with, in terms of drama, if you could approach these things with a lot more depth. There's a lot to be said, and a lot to be questioned and answered— well, not answered, because you can't answer, it's not your job to answer in a drama or in being an actor— and [we are interrupted by the arrival of David Jackson]... There he is, there's the big man himself. I'm now being approached by Gan! [And on that note, our interview is cut short, as our time runs out and Brian and I have to leave for other appointments.]

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MICHAEL KEATING REFLECTS ON LIFE AFTER, AND OUTSIDE OF BLAKE'S 7...

JAN CHAPPELL AND SALLY KNYVETTE RECALL THE DIFFICULTIES IN BEING "BLAKE'S 7 GIRLS", AND HOW THINGS MIGHT BE DIFFERENT IF THE POPULAR SCIENCE FICTION SERIES WAS TO BE FILMED TODAY...

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